

A CASTLE IN SPAIN.





'The bench tilted up, and his royal person went down.'

A CASTLE IN SPAIN

A NOVEL

BY
JAMES DE MILLE



London
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1884
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A CASTLE IN SPAIN.

CHAPTER I.

HOW A PARTY OF TRAVELLERS SET OUT ON A JOURNEY.

THE train for the North was about to start from Madrid, and the station was filled with the usual varied and bustling crowd. Throngs of soldiers were there; throngs of priests; throngs of civilians; throngs of peasants; all moving to and fro, intermingled with the railway employés, and showing the power of steam to stir up even the lazy Spaniard to unwonted punctuality and portentous activity. In the midst of this busy scene two men stood apart, each by himself, with eyes fixed upon the entrance, as though expecting some one whose advent was of no ordinary importance. One of these was an unmistakable Spaniard, of medium size, dark complexion, penetrating black eyes, and sombre countenance. His dress was that of a civilian, but his bearing was military, and his face and general expression savoured of the camp. The other was an Englishman, with all his country beaming in his face, tall in stature, light in complexion, with gray eyes, and open, frank expression. He had a thin moustache, flaxen side whiskers, and no beard. He stood in an easy, nonchalant attitude, with an eye-glass stuck in one eye, and a light cane in his hand, which he switched carelessly upon his leg.

At length the two were roused by the approach of a party of people who were undoubtedly the very ones for whom they had been thus waiting.

This party consisted of three persons. First, there was an elderly man, florid, stoutish, and fussy—the Paterfamilias of *Punch*, with a dash of the heavy father of comedy. He was evidently in a terrible strait, and halting between two opinions, namely, whether he should stay and watch over his family, or go away and see after his luggage.

Then there was a lady of certain or uncertain age—a faded, washed-out blonde, who surveyed the scene with a mixture of trepidation and caution. Neither of these, however, could have

had any interest in the eyes of the two watchers ; and it must have been the third member of this party who had led them to lie in wait.

In truth, this third one seemed well worthy of such attention. She was a young lady, of slight and elegant figure ; with a sweet and lovely face, round, arch, full of liveliness, merriment, and volatility, which were expressed in every glance of her sparkling eyes. And while the man fidgeted and the woman fussed, this young person stood with admirable self-possession, looking round inquiringly, as though she too might be expecting some one,

Paterfamilias hesitated a little longer, and then made up his mind, for, telling the ladies to wait, he hurried away after his luggage. No sooner had he gone than the two young men, who had held back till then, hurried to the spot. The Englishman reached it first. The elder lady, on seeing him, stared for an instant, and then abruptly turned her back, thus giving him the cut direct in the most pointed and insulting manner. In thus turning she found herself face to face with the Spaniard, who made a very ceremonious bow, saying :

‘It gif me mooch pleasure, Madame Russell, to pay my respetto, an’ to weesh the good-day.’

At this the lady hesitated, as though intending to give this man also the cut, but finally she chose to be gracious ; so extending her hand, she said :

‘Thanks, Captain Lopez, I’m glad to see you, for Mr. Russell has left us, and I’m a little frightened in this crowd.’

‘Oh, then,’ said Lopez, ‘I hope to haf the honnaire to condut you to the carriage, and to say the adios.’

‘Oh, thanks,’ said Mrs. Russell, ‘I shall really feel very much obliged.’

Now the Englishman had scarcely seemed to notice the insult of Mrs. Russell ; for, brushing past her, he had instantly advanced towards the young lady aforesaid, and, seized her hand with a quick, strong, hungry grasp. And the young lady aforesaid, whose eyes had been fixed on him as he advanced, grasped his hand also, while a flush passed over her lovely face, and her eyes rested upon him with a look which might well thrill through and through the favoured recipient of such a glance.

‘Why, Mr. Ashby !’ said she, in innocent surprise, ‘you here ?’

‘Katie,’ said Ashby, in a tremulous voice, ‘little darling,’ he continued, in a lower tone, ‘didn’t you know that I’d be here ?’

‘Well, I should have felt disappointed,’ said Katie softly, ‘if you had not been here.’

At this moment Mrs. Russell turned, and said sharply :

‘Come, Katie.’

‘All right,’ said Ashby coolly ; ‘I’ll see Miss Westlorton on board the train.’

Mrs. Russell looked vexed.

'Katie,' said she, 'I wish you to stay by me.'

'Oh yes, auntie dearest,' said Katie, with her usual self-possession; 'of course I shall.'

But she made not the slightest movement to leave Ashby, and this annoyed Mrs. Russell all the more. She looked all around, as though for help. The Spaniard's eyes were all ablaze with wrath and jealousy.

'Madame Russell,' said he, in an eager voice, 'commanda me, I beg, I shall help.'

These words were plainly audible to Ashby, who, however, only smiled.

'Madame,' said Lopez, still more eagerly, 'commanda me. Shall I condut the mees?'

For a moment Mrs. Russell seemed inclined to accept the proffered aid, but it was only for a moment. The good lady was timid. She dreaded a scene. A quarrel in so public a place between these two jealous and hot-headed youths would be too terrible, so she at once gave way.

'Oh no, no,' she said hurriedly. 'Thanks, Captain Lopez, I think I shall ask you to conduct me to our carriage. Mr. Russell will be with us immediately.'

Upon this Lopez offered his arm, which Mrs. Russell took, and they both went off. Ashby followed slowly with Katie.

'Katie,' said he, after a pause, 'I'm going too.'

'What?' said Katie in a joyous voice, 'in this train?'

'Yes, along with you.'

'How perfectly lovely!' said Katie, which expression showed that these two were on very good terms with one another. 'But then, you know,' she resumed, 'Mr. Russell has the carriage for us only.'

'Oh, well, it's all the same,' said Ashby. 'I'm going on in the same train. That will be happiness enough. But see here,' he added in a hurried voice, 'take this letter;' and with this he slipped a letter into her hand, which she instantly concealed in her pocket. 'I'll see you to-night at Burgos,' he continued in a low tone, 'and then at Biarritz or Bayonne. I have friends in both places. You must do what I ask you. You must be mine. You must, darling. Don't mind these confounded Russells. They're nothing to you, compared with me. Russell has no right to interfere. He's not your uncle; he's only a miserable guardian; and he's a contemptible scoundrel too, and I told him so to his face. He's planning to get you to marry that cad of a son of his. But read my letter. Make up your mind to-day, darling. I'll see you to-night at Burgos.'

Ashby poured forth this in a quiet, low, earnest voice as they traversed the short space that lay between them and the cars,

while Katie listened in silence. Meanwhile the others had reached a carriage, which Mrs. Russell entered : Lopez immediately followed.

'Oh, look !' cried Katie ; 'Captain Lopez has gone into our carriage. He must be going to travel with us.'

'The infernal sneak !' growled Ashby. 'But then,' he continued, 'what's the use of that ? He can't go. Why, old Russell hates him worse than me.'

At this moment Mrs. Russell put forth her head.

'Katie !' she called, in a thin, shrill voice.

'Yes, auntie dear,' said Katie.

'In a moment,' chimed in Ashby.

'Perhaps I'd better go,' said Katie ; 'she's so horrid, you know.'

'Then,' said Ashby, 'good-bye for the present, my own darling.'

Saying this, he took her in his arms and deliberately kissed her two or three times. Katie then darted away and entered the carriage, to find Mrs. Russell speechless with indignation. The moment Katie had gone, up came Russell in a fury.

'Look here, sir !' he cried, shaking his fist at Ashby. 'I say, sir ! Look here, sir ! You scoundrel ! Didn't I tell you——'

'And look here, you !' said Ashby, in a stern voice, laying his hand heavily on the other's shoulder, 'none of this insolence, my good man, or I shall have to teach you better manners. You know perfectly well that Katie is engaged to me, and that I mean to make her my wife.'

'You shall never !' cried Russell passionately ; 'never—never !'

'Pooh !' exclaimed Ashby contemptuously.

'I'm her guardian,' said Russell.

'That may be,' said Ashby calmly, 'but only for a few months longer. I can wait. Don't be alarmed.'

'You shall never marry her !'

'Pooh, my good man ! attend to your luggage.'

Muttering inarticulate threats, mingled with curses, Russell now stamped off, and entered the carriage. Here he found Lopez. At the sight of this man his fury burst all bounds. With Ashby he had felt under some restraint ; but with Lopez there was nothing of the kind, and he ordered him out in the most insulting manner. Lopez, however, refused to stir, telling him that Madame Russell had given him permission to remain.

'Madame Russell be hanged !' roared the other. 'You get out of this, or else I'll kick you out !'

'No, señor,' said Lopez coolly, 'I advise you not to try violencia.'

For a moment Russell measured him from head to foot ; but the sight of the sinewy young Spaniard did not reassure him. His own muscles were somewhat flabby, and by no means fit for

struggle with this vigorous youth. So he chose another and a safer mode. He sprang out and began to bawl loudly for the guard. But, very unfortunately, Russell could not speak a word of Spanish, and when the guard came up he could not explain himself. And so Russell, after all, might have had to travel with his unwelcome companion had not an unexpected ally appeared upon the scene. This was Ashby, who had been standing by, and had comprehended the whole situation. Now Ashby could speak Spanish like a native.

'See here, Russell,' said he, 'I don't mind giving you a lift. What's the row?'

Russell hesitated for a moment, but his rage against Lopez had quite swallowed up his anger at Ashby, and he accepted the aid of the latter. So he went on to explain what Ashby very well knew—the situation in the carriage. Ashby thereupon explained to the guard. The guard then ordered Lopez out. At which summons the gallant captain thought fit to beat a retreat, which he effected in good order, drums beating and colours flying, and with many expressions of polite regret to the ladies and many wishes for a pleasant journey. Arriving outside, however, our noble hidalgo found the blast of war blowing, and so he at once proceeded to stiffen his sinews and summon up his blood. Taking no notice of Russell, he advanced to Ashby.

'Señor,' said he in Spanish, 'for the part that you have taken in this matter I will call you to account.'

Ashby smiled disdainfully.

'You have insulted me,' said Lopez fiercely. 'This insult must be washed out in blood—your heart's blood or mine. I am going in this train.'

'Indeed! So am I,' said Ashby.

'We shall find a place—and a time.'

'Whenever you please,' said the other shortly.

'Señor, I will communicate with you.'

Both the young men bowed, and with their hearts full of hate they separated to take their places in the train. And now at this particular juncture there came forth from behind a pillar a female figure, which figure had been there for some time, and had closely watched the whole of Ashby's proceedings from beginning to end. It was impossible to see her face, but her graceful shape, and quiet, active movements, indicated youth, and suggested possible beauty. This figure hastened towards the train, and entered the very carriage into which Ashby had gone. The next moment the guard banged the door to behind her, the great bell rang, the engine puffed and snorted, and then, with the roar of steam, the clank of machinery, and the rumble of many wheels, the long train thundered out of the station on its eventful journey to the North.

CHAPTER II.

HOW MR. ASHBY MEETS WITH A VERY DEAR AND VERY LOVELY YOUNG FRIEND.

ON entering the carriage Ashby took a seat and prepared to make himself comfortable for the journey. The hurried events of the last few minutes, the farewell to Katie, the prospect of a new meeting at Burgos, the additional prospect of a hostile encounter with Lopez, were certainly sufficient food for reflection. Consequently he was in a fit of abstraction so profound that he did not notice the female who entered the carriage.

As the train rolled out, the new-comer also made herself comfortable in her seat, which, being opposite to that of Ashby, gave her the opportunity of examining his face at her leisure, if she felt so inclined, while she herself was so closely veiled as to baffle recognition. Her dress, though very plain, was in the latest fashion, and she wore with inimitable grace that marvellous Spanish mantilla which is equally adapted to adorn and to conceal. Although in the opposite seat, she was not close to Ashby, but at the other end of the carriage, in which position she could watch him the more easily. These two were the only occupants.

Once or twice Ashby's eyes fell on her as he raised his head or changed his position, but he paid no attention to her, nor did he even seem aware of her existence; while she sat veiled, so that the direction of her glance could not be seen.

For about half an hour the situation remained unaltered, and then at the end of that time the lady made a readjustment of her mantilla, which exposed all her head and face. The hands which were raised to perform this act were soft, round, plump, and dimpled, and might of themselves have attracted the admiration of one less preoccupied than Ashby; while the face that was now revealed was one which might have roused the dullest of mortals. It was a dark olive face, with features of exquisite delicacy; the eyes were large, lustrous, and melting, fringed with long lashes; the eyebrows delicately pencilled; the hair rich black, glossy, and waving in innumerable ripples. Her cheeks were dimpled, and her lips were curved into a faint smile as she sat with a demure face and watched Ashby. It may have been a certain mesmerism in her gaze, or it may only have been that Ashby had at last grown weary of his own thoughts, for suddenly he looked up, and caught her eyes fixed thus on him. For a moment an expression of astonishment filled his face; then the smile of the lady deepened, and her eyes fell. At this Ashby jumped from his seat.

'By heavens!' he exclaimed. 'Dolores! Oh, Dolores!'

He uttered these words with a strange intonation, yet there

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Dolores ! on, yet there

was joy in his eyes and in the tone of his voice, together with the wonder that had been at first displayed. As he spoke he seized her hand in both of his, and, holding it fast, seated himself in the place immediately opposite. After a moment Dolores drew away her hand with a light laugh.

'Ah, señor,' said she, 'you do not seem very quick at recognising your old acquaintances.'

She spoke with the purest Castilian accent, and the rich and mellow tones of her voice were inexpressibly sweet.

'I—I—had no idea—no idea that you were anywhere near. You were the last—the very last person that I could have expected to see. How could I expect to see you here, Dolores? I thought that you were still at Valencia. Are you alone?'

'Yes—just now—from here to Burgos. I am on my way to visit my aunt at Pampeluna. She is ill. Mamma could not come with me, for she is ill too. So I have to travel alone. The good Tilda came with me to Madrid, but had to return to mamma. There was no time to seek another companion. Besides, it is only from here to Burgos.'

'Oh, Dolores, little Dolores!' cried Ashby, 'how delightful it is to see you again! What a lucky chance!'

'But it was not altogether chance,' said Dolores.

'How?'

'Why, I saw you.'

'Saw me?'

'Yes; I was watching you. You see, I was in the station waiting for the train, and saw you come in. I then watched you all the time till you entered this carriage, and then I came here too. Now, sir?'

Saying this, Dolores tossed her pretty little head with a triumphant air, and smiled more bewitchingly than ever.

'You see,' she continued, in the frankest and most engaging manner, 'I was so veiled that no one could know me, and when I saw you I was very glad indeed; and I thought I would follow you, and speak to you, and see if you had any remembrance left of poor little me.'

For a moment there was a shade of embarrassment on Ashby's face, and then it passed. He took her hand and pressed it fervently.

'Dolores,' he said, 'dear little friend of mine, I can never forget you as long as I live, and all that was done for me by you and yours. This sudden meeting with you is the most delightful thing that could possibly have happened.'

Dolores laughed, and again drew her hand demurely away.

'But oh, Señor Ashby,' she said, 'how absent you were in the station!—and here—not one look for the poor Dolores!'

'Oh, Dolores!' said Ashby, in a tone of tender apology, 'how

could I imagine that it was you? You were veiled so closely that no one could recognise you. Why did you not speak before?

'Ah, señor, young ladies in Spain cannot be so bold as I hear they are in England. Even this is an unheard-of adventure—that I, a young lady, should travel alone. But it is a case of life and death, you know, and it is only from here to Burgos, where I shall find friends. And then I wanted to speak to you once more. And you, señor—are you going to England now?

Again there came over Ashby's face a look of embarrassment. His present journey was a delicate subject, which he could not discuss very well with Dolores.

'Well, no,' he said, after a brief pause. 'I'm only going as far as Bayonne—on business. But how long it seems since I saw you Dolores! It's more than a year.'

'And have I changed, señor?' she asked sweetly.

'Yes,' said Ashby, looking at her intently.

Dolores returned his look with another, the intensity of which was wonderful to Ashby. He seemed to look into the depths of her soul, and the lustrous eyes which were fastened on his appeared as though they strove to read his inmost heart. Her manner, however, was light and bantering, and it was with a merry smile that she went on:

'Ah! so I have changed? And how, señor—for the better?'

'No, and yes,' said Ashby, drinking in her dark, deep, liquid glances. 'In the first place, you could not possibly be better or more beautiful than you used to be; but, in the second place, you are more womanly.'

'But I am not yet seventeen, señor.'

'I know,' said Ashby, 'of course.'

'And you have not yet asked after the dear one—the mamma, who loves you so,' said Dolores, in rather an inconsequential way.

'I was thinking of you, so that all other thoughts were driven out of my head.'

'That's pretty,' said Dolores; 'but do you not want to hear about the dear mamma?'

'Of course. I shall love her and revere her till I die. Did she not save my life? Was she not a mother to me in my sorest need? And you, Dolores—'

He stopped short, and seemed somewhat confused and agitated.

'Yes,' said Dolores, in a tone of indescribable tenderness; 'yes, she loved you—the dear mamma—like a mother, and has always talked about you. It is always, "Dolores, child, sing that song that Señor Assebi taught you; sing that beautiful, beautiful English song of 'Sweet Home'; sing that sweetest, loveliest, most mournful Scottish song of 'Lochaber.''"

And here, in a voice full of exquisite tenderness and pathos, Dolores sang that mournful air, 'Lochaber,' with Spanish words. The tender regret of her voice affected herself; she faltered, and her eyes filled; but the tears were instantly chased away by a sunny smile.

'And so, señor,' said she, 'you see that I have forgotten nothing of it—nothing.'

'Nor I,' said Ashby; 'nor I—nothing. I have forgotten not one thing.'

His voice was low and tremulous. There was a strange, yearning look in his eyes. With a sudden impulse he held out his hand, as though to take hers; but Dolores gently drew hers away.

'And have you been in Madrid ever since?' she asked, in a tone that seemed to convey something of reproach.

'No,' said Ashby. 'You know, when I fell ill at Valencia, where you saved my life by your tender care, I was on my way to Barcelona. When I left you, I resumed my interrupted journey. Then I went to Marseilles and Leghorn, then to Cadiz, and finally to Madrid. I've been in Madrid three months.'

'And you didn't think it worth while to write to us in all that long time?' said Dolores, with a reproachfulness in her tone which was now very marked.

'Write?' said Ashby; 'why, I wrote twice—once from Marseilles, and once from Leghorn.'

'We never heard,' said Dolores sadly; 'not once.'

'But I wrote,' said Ashby earnestly. 'Don't you believe me, Dolores?'

'Believe you, señor? What a question! It was the fault of the post-office in these times of trouble—that was all. And, señor, I am very glad to know all, for I did not know what to think about it.'

'And am I forgiven, Dolores?' Ashby asked.

Dolores replied with a sweet smile, and held out her hand, which the young man took and pressed tenderly, not caring to let it go.

'I did not know,' said he, 'there was anything against me to be forgiven; but this is a sign that you are the same Dolores that you were a year ago.'

'Always,' said she, 'always the same;' and then she withdrew her hand. 'And now, señor,' said she, with a perceptible effort, as of one who approaches a disagreeable subject, 'this beautiful Ingleesa—who is she?'

Ashby's eyes fell before the fixed and profound inquiry of those of Dolores, who watched him close, and lost nothing of his change of features.

'This lady?' said he, and hesitated.

'Yes,' said Dolores gently.

'She is a—a—Miss Westlotorn.'

'And she loves you very, very, very dearly and tenderly,' said Dolores, in a quick, breathless voice; 'and you are going to be married to her, and she will soon be your wife.'

Ashby said nothing, but sat looking strangely embarrassed.

'You never mentioned her to us at Valencia,' continued Dolores.

'No,' said Ashby.

'And why not?' asked Dolores, who saw his confusion, but was eager to know the truth.

'I had not seen her,' said Ashby.

'You had not seen her,' repeated Dolores. 'Ah!' she hesitated for a moment and then went on—'so you saw her afterward. And she loves you!'

These last words were spoken with indescribable tenderness and mournfulness.

'And—she—loves—you,' she repeated, in a voice that had sunk almost to a whisper; 'and she is to be your wife—the English girl!'

'Well,' said Ashby, making an effort to overcome his embarrassment, 'it is—it is about time. The fact is, I—I did ask her to—to be my wife.'

'And she?'

'She? Well—she said she would, I think,' said Ashby evasively.

'You think!' exclaimed Dolores.

'Well, you see, there's a difficulty.'

'A difficulty?'

'Yes. Her guardian will not consent.'

'But that is nothing,' said Dolores, in an animated tone. 'You must take her, and run away with her.'

Ashby looked at Dolores with a strange, eager, hungry gaze.

'But there's another objection,' said he.

'Objection? What is that?'

'I don't want to.'

'What?' asked Dolores in surprise.

Ashby hesitated for a moment, and then said with an effort:

'I thought before we left that I loved her; but since I have seen you again—I feel—that I do not.'

These words were spoken rapidly, in a low, feverish whisper. At first Dolores started as though she had been shot. Then she averted her face, and held up her hands deprecatingly.

'Ah,' said she, in a sad voice, 'that is all idle, idle, idle, foolish, foolish, foolish compliment, and nothing more. You must not say that again, or I will never forgive you—never, never!'

At this Ashby was brought back to his senses with a sudden and wholesome shock, and said no more upon that point. In fact, he now felt afraid that he had said altogether too much.

CHAPTER III.

HOW ASHBY MEETS WITH ANOTHER FRIEND, AND HOW HE TAKES HIM INTO HIS CONFIDENCE.

THAT evening they arrived at Burgos, where, on account of troubles along the line, the train was to remain until ten o'clock on the following day. Dolores informed Ashby that she was going to stay with friends, and refused to allow him to accompany her to the house, in spite of his earnest entreaties. She had been in Burgos before, she said. The house was not far from the station, and she was firm in her resolve to go alone. Ashby followed her, however, and saw her pass in safety through the streets and into a large and venerable house not far from the Cathedral. He then retraced his steps, and made the best of his way to the Fonda del Norte, where he put up for the night.

Here, after dinner, he loitered about for a time, meditating over the events of the day, and conjecturing about the morrow. His situation was growing somewhat complicated; for there was Katie, whom he had promised to see at Burgos; but on leaving the train he had followed Dolores, and now he had not the faintest idea where the Russells had gone. They were not at the Fonda del Norte. It was also too late now to hunt them up, and too late to hope to see Katie. That must be postponed till the morrow.

Ashby was beginning to feel more melancholy than ever in his life before, when suddenly he was roused by a loud exclamation.

'Well, by Jove! Halloo, old boy! Ashby himself, by all that's wonderful!'

At this Ashby looked up, and the next instant he was heartily wringing the hand of the new-comer.

'Rivers! Harry Rivers! How are you, my boy? and where in the world did you come from?'

'By Jove! do you know, old fellow,' said Harry Rivers, 'I call this no end of a piece of good luck? I've been bored to death at Burgos. But come along to my rooms and give an account of yourself.'

The two friends then went off, and soon were comfortably seated in the rooms of Harry Rivers, with some flasks of wine and Havanas to help along the evening hours.

Harry Rivers was of about the same age as Ashby, but totally different in appearance. He was of medium height, very well knit in his frame, and very well dressed. His hair was crisp and curling; his brow broad and open; his eyes full of light, and

life, and volatility. He had a small moustache, but no beard or whiskers, and his laughing eyes, with his smooth face and winning smile, gave him a most engaging appearance. In short, Harry Rivers was one of those rare good fellows who make friends wherever they go; who take the world into their confidence who insist on making everyone familiar with their varying fortunes; and carry about with them a perpetual atmosphere of joyousness and breezy cheerfulness.

'Well, old chap,' said Harry, as they sat enjoying their cigars and wine, 'I haven't seen or heard of you since you left Barcelona. How did you get on with your business in Italy? What made you turn up in this queer way at Burgos? This isn't the sort of place that I'd expect to find a friend in.'

'I'm on my way to Bayonne just now,' said Ashby, 'and I stopped here—because the train stopped.'

'Bayonne isn't a bad place,' said Harry; 'I spent a week there once—good wine, but bad tobacco and infernal cigars. Here we have good cigars and bad wine. Do you know, old chap, I don't dote on any of the Spanish wines—do you? At the same time I drink your very good health, together with future prosperity and good luck in your present undertaking, whatever that may be.'

'Thanks,' said Ashby, 'and the same to you.'

'Look here, old chap,' said Harry, 'you look a little down in the mouth—a trifle seedy. No bad luck, I hope?'

'Oh no,' said Ashby, 'nothing in particular.'

'The fact is, you seem to have lost your high moral tone, and your former happy flow of genial conversation. I don't want to be a Paul Pry, my dear boy; but if you wish to gain sympathy and find a friend who can hear and help, why, all I can say is—here you have him.'

'Well,' said Ashby, 'I'm a little preoccupied, that's a fact.'

'Preoccupied? That's your name for it, is it? Well, suppose we adopt that word—what then?'

Ashby knocked the ashes off his cigar with a reflective look and said:

'I rather think, Harry, that I had better make you my father-confessor.'

'All right,' said Harry; 'that's what I was made for. Go ahead, my son. Confess—out with it. Cleanse your bosom of its perilous stuff; make a clean breast of it.'

'Well,' said Ashby, 'in the first place, I'm just now meditating matrimony.'

'Matrimony?'

'Yes; but that's not all. It's a sort of runaway match.'

'A runaway match! By Jove! Only think of a fellow like you planning a runaway match! Now if it was me, it would be the proper thing. But is it really to be a runaway match?'

'Well, it amounts to that, for I've asked the girl to clear out from her friends and come with me.'

Well, old fellow, all I can say is, good luck to you both. And please, mayn't I be the best man,' he added, with a droll accent that brought an involuntary smile to Ashby's face. 'But go on. Who is the charmer? and where is she now?'

Well, to answer your last question first, she's here—in Burgos.'

'Ah,' said Harry, 'I twig! Came on in the same train. Both planned it together. You cut across the border, and are made one. Why, it's like Gretna Green!'

'Well, you've hit it partly, only she's with her friends just now—that is to say, she's with her guardian and his wife; and the problem to be solved by me is, how I am to get her from those two dragons.'

'Oh, that can be done. But now, my boy, to come to the point, who is she?—her name?'

'Her name,' said Ashby, 'is Westlotorn—Katie Westlotorn.'

'Westlotorn,' repeated Harry: 'never saw her, and don't think I ever heard the name in all my life.'

'I got acquainted with her at Cadiz a few months ago,' said Ashby. 'Her father had been a merchant there, and had died about a year before. She was there with her step-mother, who took no particular care of her—a miserable beast of a woman. She was in correspondence with her sister in England, a Mrs. Russell, whom she kept urging to come on and take Katie away from Spain. This Mrs. Westlotorn had induced her husband before his death to appoint Russell, her sister's husband, Katie's guardian, and it was this Russell and his wife whom she expected on, but they could not get away very easily. After a time Mrs. Westlotorn decided to move to Madrid, which she thought would be a pleasanter residence. So about three months ago she made the move, and after that Katie and I saw as much of one another as we wished, and she became regularly engaged to me.'

'So the step-mother approved, did she?'

'Oh, altogether?'

'Well, what's the trouble?'

'Oh, this infernal Russell, the guardian, you know! As soon as he came on, he and his wife began to make trouble, and tried to break up the engagement; they also tried to keep me away from the house. Then there was another difficulty: they allowed some Spanish blackguards to get acquainted with them. Mrs. Westlotorn, the widow, you know, is hot-and-heavy in the chase of a husband, and thought that all the young fellows who came after Katie were after her. The worst of them was a chap named Lopez, who calls himself a captain in the Spanish army—a poor, pitiful beggar whom I shall have to horsewhip. And, by-the-

bye, that reminds me—I expect to be called out to-morrow or next day.’

‘Called out? how?’

‘Oh, by this pitiful fellow Lopez;’ and Ashby related the incident at the Madrid station.

‘By Jove!’ said Harry, ‘this is lucky. I’m glad I came upon you at such a time. You won’t have to trust to a bungling Spaniard to be your second.’

‘The worst of it is,’ said Ashby, ‘I believe that this Russell is one of the most infernal villains that ever lived, and that he is concocting some scheme against Katie.’

‘A scheme! how?’

‘Well, I’ll tell you. I saw from the first that he was hostile to me. Possibly this may have been my own fault, for I saw the fellow was a beastly cad, not at all fit to be Katie’s guardian. Why, he’s a tailor! think of that—a tailor! that’s all he is. By Jove! only think—a tailor! and Katie’s guardian! Do you suppose I was going to stand any nonsense from a tailor?’

‘By Jove! no—not unless you’re deep in his books,’ said Harry; ‘and even then, when you’re away from home you ought to be a free man. So you rather slighted the guardian, did you?’

‘Well, I told him to go to the devil; and the fellow took offence, you know.’

‘H’m—odd, too,’ said Harry. ‘Why should he take offence at such a simple remark?’

‘Don’t know, I’m sure,’ said Ashby; ‘but there it is, you see. However, that makes no difference. I’ve defied him and threatened him.’

‘Threatened! Why?’

‘Why, because the infernal scoundrel is deep in some plan to get hold of Katie’s money.’

‘Katie’s money? Oh, she has money, then?’

‘Of course—about thirty or forty thousand pounds. Most of this, I believe, is in Spanish bonds, in which Westlotorn was foolish enough to invest.’

‘Not very good just now, hey?’

‘Oh, they’ll be good ultimately. At any rate, old Russell’s bound to get hold of all this and keep it for himself, and I’m resolved that he shall disgorge. He’s got half a dozen plans. One plan is to try to get her to marry his son, an infernal, red-headed, cock-eyed cad of a fellow—a tailor, too. Another plan is to put her off in some out-of-the-way place here in Spain, where no one will ever hear of her. Another plan is to ship her off to America; another is to keep her in seclusion in his own home, where no one will ever see her; while another is to dispose of the Spanish bonds in such a way as to make it appear that they are a dead loss!’

'You seem to be very deep in Russell's plans,' said Harry. 'He could not have told you all this himself. If he did, he must be of an uncommonly confiding disposition.'

'He tell me!' said Ashby. 'Of course he didn't. I found it all out—no matter how. Oh, the fellow's a desperate swindler—he'll stick at nothing. But, at any rate, he knows that I have my eye on him, and he'll hardly dare to do anything against Katie's interest so long as I am near enough to watch over her.'

'You and Russell must have had rather interesting conversations. Did you ever tell him your suspicions?'

'They're not suspicions—they're facts. Tell him—of course I did, and that's one reason why he hates me. He knows perfectly well that I see through and through him. We had a row at the station, just before leaving Madrid, because I came down to see Katie off; and he's now on the watch to prevent me from seeing her again.'

'And what do you propose to do about it?'

'Oh, I've arranged it all. I'll tell you. I wrote a letter, and handed it to her just as we were leaving Madrid, asking her to meet me at Biarritz, naming a place. I have friends there, and I will take her to their house. The English chaplain can marry us. We will then cut off to England. On the arrival of Russell I will go to him and demand my wife's property. If he refuses to disgorge, I will at once commence legal proceedings against him, and by way of preliminary I will give the scoundrel a horse-whipping.'

'This arrangement is all very well; but what about the lady? Will she consent?'

'Consent? Why, she'll jump at the chance,' said Ashby confidently.

'She must be very fond of you.'

'Fond of me? Why, she's perfectly infatuated about me.'

'Good!' said Harry. 'Well, my boy, I'm your man. You want me for war and for peace, so here am I—your second at the duel, and your groomsman at the wedding.'

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE RAILWAY TRAIN COMES TO A SUDDEN STOP.

VERY early on the following morning Ashby was up and out. He walked over the town in all directions, with a strange, furtive watchfulness in his eyes, as though on the look-out for some one. Who was the object of his search? Was it Katie, whose answer to his proposal had not yet been given? Was it Dolores, whom he had tracked on the previous evening? Or was it his rival

Lopez, with whom he had yet to stand in mortal conflict? Whichever it was did not appear, for Ashby was doomed to be unsuccessful, and to return to his inn a baffled man. Barely time enough was now left him to snatch a hasty repast, after which he hurried to the station.

The place was thronged. Passengers were arriving, and the train was filling rapidly. Ashby stood, as he had stood on the previous day, watching. Singularly enough, Lopez also, like himself, was again on the look-out, for he could see him scowling in the distance. No words, however, passed between them, and the challenge which Lopez had threatened was not yet forthcoming. At length the patience of both was rewarded.

A cab drove up. The broad face of Russell was seen through the window. The rest of the party were inside. But, to Ashby's amazement, he saw Harry Rivers riding outside with the driver. As the cab stopped, Rivers leaped lightly down, and opened the cab door himself. Then old Russell got out. Then Harry assisted Mrs. Russell to descend. After this he assisted Katie out of the cab, and Ashby saw that she looked as fresh, as bright, and as blooming as a rose, that she showed not a trace of care or anxiety, and that she was as sprightly and coquettish as ever.

'Confound the fellow!' growled Ashby to himself, as he wondered how Harry had found them out and made their acquaintance, envying him also his good luck.

But the climax had yet to come. There was one passenger more. This one also was assisted out of the cab by Harry. To the utter stupefaction of Ashby, this one was Dolores.

So overwhelmed was Ashby that he stood without motion, having quite lost all that presence of mind and coolness which usually distinguished him. It was wonderful enough to find Harry hand in glove with the Russells, but to find Dolores there along with Katie was a knock-down blow. It made his situation so confused and full of complications, that he could not think of any course of action. So he stood, and he stared, and the party came along on their way to the train. As they approached, Katie looked at him with a bright smile, full of tender meaning, and a flush passed over her face. Dolores, on the contrary, allowed her dark eyes to rest on him for an instant, and then looked down. This troubled him, for at that moment it happened that he was longing for a smile from Dolores. Still, he was glad to get that look from Katie. The fact is, the fellow was too ridiculous, for he actually wanted a smile from each of them.

As they passed, Harry dropped behind.

'Look here, Ashby,' said he; 'where in heaven's name have you hid yourself all the morning? I thought you wanted to find Miss Westlotorn.'

'So I did,' said Ashby, in a rueful tone.

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'Why, confound it, man, she was close by us all the time. When I went out I found your dear friend, old Russell.'

'Russell!' cried Ashby; 'but how did you get acquainted with him?'

'Acquainted!' cried Harry. 'Man alive! By Jove! a man ought to know his own tailor, oughtn't he? I didn't think of it last night. I thought your Russell was a different man: the name is common enough, you know. People generally dodge their tailors, but I'm not proud, and I don't owe him very much; and besides, this is Spain, and he can't dun me. Moreover, he was in a street row, and I helped him out with my Spanish. What the mischief does he mean by coming with his family to Burgos with no other language than English? But, by-the-bye, old fellow, I must hurry: I'm going to join their party and travel in their carriage. Hope you'll enjoy yourself as well as I intend to. I would have excused myself, only, you know, when there's a chance of travelling with a couple of such pretty girls as those, only a madman would decline.'

All this Harry poured forth in a torrent of words, and before Ashby had a chance of making a remark he was off. Ashby watched him, and saw him enter the carriage where Katie and Dolores had gone with the Russells; and then, drawing a long breath, he went slowly to the train and took his seat. There was only one other occupant of the carriage where he sat. This was a priest. He wore a broad-brimmed hat; his eyes were concealed by spectacles: he had also a heavy brown beard and moustache. So engaged was he in reading his breviary, that as Ashby entered he did not look up or take any notice of him whatever.

Lopez, also, had seen the whole proceeding, and had put on it his own interpretation. As Ashby entered the train, so did he, and soon the whole of these people whose fortunes were so entangled were whirling along to the North.

Ashby sat buried in gloom, with his heart full of bitterness and wrath; of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. He had hoped to see Katie. He had counted quite confidently on meeting once more with Dolores. He had felt sure of Harry Rivers. But now all three had failed him; and, what was worse, all three had drifted away from him in one another's company, and appeared to be perfectly indifferent to him, and perfectly happy without him.

The priest was unsociable, and kept reading his breviary as though his life depended upon it. Yet this made no difference to Ashby. He did not desire to make any new acquaintances or talk small-talk with strangers. He preferred to be left to his own thoughts, dismal as they were. He was in no mood for con-

versation, for his mind was full of material for meditation, conjecture, wonder, and bewilderment.

Why, he thought, had Dolores deserted him? How had she become acquainted with Katie? And Harry—to which of these two was he making himself so infernally agreeable? Whichever it was, it seemed equally bad. Ashby felt bitterly resentful against all of them. Katie seemed to be the worst. She might have contrived, he thought, to give him some sign. But then he recollected that on the previous evening he was tracking Dolores, when he ought to have gone on Katie's trail. As for Dolores, he thought that she might at least have shown herself when he was wandering through the streets in the morning hours. But perhaps she expected to find him in the neighbourhood of Katie. Evidently he himself had acted like a fool in leaving the hotel. As for Harry Rivers, he could not help feeling as though this was the worst of all. Harry had it now all his own way: a gay, careless, impulsive dog—a fellow who would forget the whole world while under the influence of a pair of bright eyes—a fellow who was even now, perhaps, trying to cut him out. The miserable humbug, also, by a most abominable chance, had both these girls. Both! Insatiate monster! would not one suffice?

Thus Ashby chafed, and fumed, and, I am sorry to add, swore terribly; but all the while the train kept rolling on and on, until at length the Ebro valley was reached. Here the scenes that opened to view were most attractive. Far away on either side was a broad plain, dotted with towns and villages, and filled with olive-groves and vineyards, where cattle, and sheep, and goats grazed peacefully, and shepherds, goatherds, and vine-dressers stared lazily up as the train rolled by. The distant horizon was everywhere terminated by lofty mountains—on the south, the circling range of the Sierra de Grados; on the north, the long line of the Pyrenees and the Asturian mountains, their sides covered with foliage, their summits crowned with snow. It was a ground, too, which was rich in associations of history and romance, the arena of gallant struggle and heroic effort for many and many an age; a place that called up memories of Hannibal with his conquering armies; of Rome, with her invincible legions of Charlemagne, with his Paladins; of Abd-er-Rahman, with his brilliant Saracens; of the steel-clad Crusaders; of the martial hosts of Arragon; of the resistless infantry of Ferdinand and Isabella; of the wars of the Spanish succession; of the redcoats of Wellington; through all the ages down to the time of the story, when Don Carlos was standing among these northern mountains, as Pelajo stood more than a thousand years ago, leading on his hardy warriors to battle against all the rest of Spain.

So the train rolled on—past the numerous stations; past the towns and villages; past the long groves and vineyards; past the

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the barren, sandy tracts ; past the hillsides, with shepherds, and flocks, and herds ; past the roads, with long trains of mules ; past the peasants lolling over walls and fences—so the train passed on, mile after mile and hour after hour ; but nothing of all this was noticed by Ashby, who sat buried in his gloomy reverie, from which he was unable to rally, until at length the train came to a sudden full-stop.

About such a sudden and abrupt stop there was something very singular indeed. No station was near. The country seemed wild and deserted, and no cause was likely to stop the train at such a place except some serious accident. The priest started up with a quick movement, thrust the breviary into his pocket, and peered cautiously out of the window, looking first backward and then forward. It was this movement that first roused Ashby. He too started up and looked out. The sight that he saw was so startling that it served most effectually to chase away all morbid fancies, and give him something to think about of a far more serious character.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE WHOLE PARTY COME TO GRIEF, AND ARE CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE.

IT WAS, in truth, a strange and startling sight that met Ashby's eyes as he looked out of the window. The train had been stopped in the middle of a plain, where the road ran along an embankment about three feet high. A crowd of armed men were here, gathered about the locomotive, and already forming lines along each side of the train. All looked shabby, none had any pretensions to uniforms, and their appearance was not sufficiently picturesque for brigands. In fact, they looked like a gang of goatherds who had just taken to brigandage.

'A hard lot !' muttered Ashby to himself. Soon the tatterdemalions reached the spot, and extended their lines on both sides to the end of the train. At every window they shouted, 'Back ! back ! Be quiet, and no harm will be done !' Shouting such words as these, they aimed their guns so recklessly and with such furious gestures at the windows, that the passengers all shrank back, not only into their seats, but even into their boots. The lines of armed men thus stood guarding the train, while the passengers cowered inside. After a time a cry was heard from some one who was passing along, and who, as he passed, kept shouting into each carriage :

'This train has been stopped in the name of his Majesty King Charles. All passengers are ordered to come out forthwith.'

Arms and weapons of all kinds must be left behind. Resistance will be punished with death. God save the King !

After this the guards came and opened all the doors, and the passengers stepped forth in obedience to orders. Of these there were about a hundred altogether, and each one remained on the spot where he alighted, and was forbidden to move in any direction. From where Ashby stood he could see the whole crowd—the prisoners and their captors. He saw a group alighting from a carriage a little ahead. First came Harry Rivers, stepping out quite gaily, as though it was a picnic. On reaching the ground, he turned and assisted the ladies to descend. This did by the simple yet pleasing process of lifting them down bodily—first Katie, then Dolores. At this sight Ashby gnashed his teeth with jealous rage. Then came Russell, whom, it is perhaps unnecessary to state, Harry did not lift down. Nor did the gallant and chivalrous youth venture to lift down Mrs. Russell, being at that particular moment engaged in conversation with Katie.

Dolores, having descended, stood apart, and her dark glance, as they wandered searchingly about, fell full upon Ashby. It was a glance full of that same deep, earnest meaning which had noticed in the morning ; and so she stood looking at him, far away to speak, while Ashby looked at her also. After a time Harry's roving eyes rested upon his friend, and with a laugh he drew Katie's attention to him. At this Katie looked, and smiled brightly, and nodded her pretty little head half-a-dozen times. To Ashby this seemed like mockery. Katie, he thought, could very well bear this separation, which was so painful to herself, and could laugh and be happy with others, and could perhaps, jest about his own melancholy face. So Ashby bowed sulkily, and turned away his head.

It was rather a novelty—this sort of thing. Brigands in earlier ages had stopped travellers, but then they had always been on coaches or carriages, on horseback or on foot. Never before had they tried to stop a railway train. And yet in the progress of civilization the world had to come to this. The manners of the day easily accommodate themselves to the inventions of man. Highway robbery can be done as easily on a railroad as on a carriage road. Nevertheless, these particular men who stopped this particular train were not brigands : on the contrary, they were soldiers, forming part of the army of one who called himself the King of Spain—in short, Carlists.

The passengers were now ordered to come forward for examination, one by one. Here, on a little knoll, on one side of the motive, stood the leader of the band. He was a stout, thick-set man, with dark hair and bushy beard. Around him were a score or so of armed men. The rest of the band stood guarding

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train. One by one the passengers came forward. Each one was then ordered to hand over all the money, jewellery, watches, or other valuables which he possessed. This was to be a contribution to his Royal Majesty King Charles, who was in sore need of such contributions from all his loving and loyal subjects, in order to carry on the war against the rebels who were resisting him. Against such a command as this there could be no protest, and from it no appeal. No one offered to do either. Gold, silver, copper, dirty paper-money, watches, rings, brooches, pins, bracelets, trinkets of male and female use, were thrown promiscuously down into a large basket which stood at the feet of the Carlist chief, who loftily disdained searching any one, assuring them that he trusted to their honour as Spaniards.

Then came the turn of the Russell party. First the Paterfamilias disgorged. It was a well-filled wallet, and Russell flung it down without a word. His watch followed. Then came some trinkets from the ladies ; then Harry's purse and watch. After this they were about to move away to where the other passengers had gone, but the Carlist chief stopped them.

'By the command of his Most Gracious Majesty King Charles,' said he, 'you are to be detained.'

'May I enquire for what cause ?' asked Harry.

'Because you are foreigners,' said the Carlist chief.

Harry translated this to Russell, whose face assumed a sickly pallor. To him this was terrible.

The Carlist chief then directed them where to go, and two of the band led them to the spot.

Other Spaniards now followed, and deposited their superfluous cash in peace, without being detained. Then came the priest. He threw down a very lean wallet. No notice was taken of him, and he followed the others. These were all gathered in a group, and though conversation had not been prohibited, they were all quite silent, as was perhaps natural. Among them was Lopez, who had come there among the first. He stood there silent, watchful and attentive. He regarded the Russell party in particular, and marked their arrest.

It was now Ashby's turn. He came up and threw down his purse and watch. The Carlist chief scrutinized him carefully, and then said :

'Señor, you, being a foreigner, are to be detained for a future examination.'

'May I join the other foreigners ?' asked Ashby.

The Carlist chief shook his head.

'Pardon me, señor, but his Majesty has issued strict orders, which must be obeyed. Each foreigner must be examined by himself. The regulations are very stringent.'

With this he directed one of his men to lead the prisoner

away ; and Ashby, who for a moment had hoped that he would be able to join the Russell party, now, to his great chagrin, found himself led away to another place too distant to allow of any communication with his friends.

The mere fact of this arrest was not so bad to Ashby, since the others were in the same case precisely ; but in this continued separation from them he found material for fresh suspicion and renewed jealousy. Katie seemed to him to be altogether too bright, and lively, and joyous. He could see that she was laughing and talking with Harry quite merrily. This separation which brought sorrow to him, evidently brought joy to her. Was she, then, after all, a mere shallow flirt ? Had all her love been feigned ? Was it possible that she could so soon forget ? With these thoughts, and others like them, this idiotic youth persisted in tormenting himself.

At length the examination was ended, and at its close the Carlist chief improved the occasion by addressing a few words to the Spaniards. He reminded them that Don Carlos was their rightful King ; that this contribution was no more than his due ; that they, one and all, ought to cherish a lively affection for his sacred person ; that they ought to continue this good work which they had begun by sending more ; and that the King would be graciously pleased to accept whatever they might contribute. In his own person the gallant chieftain thanked them, and also in the name of his Majesty, for their generous contributions. Finally, he informed them that his Majesty, in his boundless pity and compassion, had graciously permitted them to resume their journey. The only exception to this permission was that of a few foreigners, who were detained, lest there might be spies among them. Against gentry of this sort, his Majesty's Government had to be particularly on their guard. The country was swarming with them. They generally pretended to be news correspondents, but in reality they were paid agents of the enemy. If any such should be caught, they would be shown no mercy.

With this address he dismissed the Spanish portion of the passengers, who hastily re-entered the train. The English prisoners were allowed to retain their luggage. Accompanied by some Carlists, they chose out what they thought needful, and this was set aside. Russell took nearly all of his. Meanwhile others of the band went through the train and helped themselves to whatever seemed useful. Among the things thus selected as useful were the mail-bags, which, like the foreigners, were taken away for further examination.

After this the obstructions were removed from the road, the engine started, the train went on its way, and the prisoners saw it no more.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW HARRY AND KATIE MANAGE TO ENJOY THEMSELVES
IN THEIR CAPTIVE STATE.

THE train moved off; and as the puffing and panting of the engine, the rumble of the wheels, and the shriek of the whistle died away in the distance, the captive passengers felt desolate indeed, for it seemed as though hope itself had been taken from them.

The Carlist chief then spent some time in examining the contributions of the loyal subjects of King Charles. These appeared to give him much satisfaction, and, after due inspection, were gathered up and deposited in a stout oaken chest.

He now turned his attention to the prisoners, and briefly examined them as to their nationality, residence, etc. Harry acted as general interpreter, so that there was no difficulty in coming to a full understanding. The chief informed them that they would have to be conveyed to another place for fuller examination. He deplored the necessity of this, and advised them to be patient, telling them that they should be put to as little trouble as possible, and that all would no doubt turn out well in the end. This he said first to the Russell party and afterward to Ashby. The Russell party had nothing to say, except old Russell himself, who said, perhaps, more than was prudent under such delicate circumstances. He chafed and fumed, all in English, and muttered something about British ironclads and writing to the *Times*. He also made some vague threats about the wrath of England, and made the statement that Britons never would be slaves. But this was in English, and Harry did not think it worth while, on the whole, to translate it to the Carlist chief. Nor did Harry feel very much inclined to say anything on his own behalf. There was, indeed, nothing to be said; and, besides, he happened to be enjoying himself very much with the young ladies.

The Carlist chief made the same statement to Ashby, who once more tried to effect a communication with his friends.

'Will you allow me now, Señor Capitan,' he said, 'to join the other foreign prisoners? They are my fellow-countrymen, and, in fact, my intimate friends.'

'Certainly, señor,' said the Carlist chief graciously. 'For my own part I have no objection—that is, for the present. But I must first see what they have to say about it.'

He did so.

Ashby would have gained his wish if it had not been for Russell. When the Carlist chief informed them that the other Englishman wished to join them, Russell made Harry translate

this to him. The moment that he understood the request, he burst forth into a passionate tirade against Ashby; and all the rage and fury that might be due to this misadventure were now poured forth upon Ashby's head.

'The infernal puppy!' he cried. 'He join us! Never! I'd rather turn Carlist myself, or brigand. If he is forced upon us, I will keep my wife and my ward apart and aloof from him. Oh, curse it all! if I could only speak Spanish! But, Mr. Rivers, I insist upon your telling this Spanish captain that we will not have it.'

And so on. Harry found it useless to argue with him, and so he told the Carlist chief that Russell objected. The Carlist chief then returned and told Ashby, to whom this was another cruel blow.

'It will make no difference,' said the Carlist chief, who saw his dejection, 'as you will all be taken to the same place.'

Two mules were now driven up, harnessed to a curious vehicle that might have taken Noah and family to the ark. Into this the Russell party entered, namely, Mr. Russell, Mrs. Russell, Katie, Dolores, and Harry. In addition to these there was the driver. Armed men followed on foot.

Another similar vehicle drove up to take the luggage, and into this Ashby was told to go. Some time was occupied in loading this, so that when Ashby started the others were already far ahead.

The Russell party were conveyed very slowly. At first their route lay along a plain, and then when this was traversed they began to ascend among the mountains. The pace had all along been slow enough, but now it became a crawl. The party were variously occupied. Russell was grumbling and growling; Mrs. Russell was sighing and whining; Dolores was silent and thoughtful; Harry, however, maintained his usual flow of spirits, and found in Katie a congenial soul. These two had been devoting themselves to one another during the whole journey, and by this time they felt quite like old friends. Each had a lively disposition, too buoyant to remain depressed, and each was glad to take any opportunity of rallying from the strokes of adverse fortune. Thus each was able to assist the other bravely in the noble effort to rise superior to circumstances.

'This is a bore,' said Harry, 'a beastly bore! I know what I should like to do—I should walk, if it were not that I very much prefer being with you.'

'But I should like to walk too,' said Katie. 'Do you think they will let us, Mr. Rivers? It would be too lovely!'

'Will you, really?' said Harry, in a joyous voice. 'Oh, they'll let us fast enough. I'll ask.'

So Harry asked, and permission was granted readily enough, for the mules could then go on faster, and there was no danger

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of these two escaping from twenty armed men. Accordingly, Harry got out and assisted Katie in the usual way, namely, by lifting her down. They then fell behind the waggon, walking along at a slow pace, having this advantage, that, although they were not making any greater progress than before, they were left more to themselves, and were under less restraint.

'Do you like this?' asked Harry, as they trudged along.

'Oh, very much indeed.'

'It's better than the waggon, isn't it?'

'I'm so awfully tired of the waggon!' said Katie.

'And we can talk without being overheard,' said Harry. 'Of course, I don't mean to say that we say anything that everybody mightn't hear; but then, you know, Miss Westlotorn, one can talk much more freely when one isn't surrounded by a coldly critical audience.'

At this Katie laughed, and stole a shy, sidelong glance at him, as though she suspected some deeper meaning in his words than that which appeared on the surface.

'Do you feel very much frightened at this adventure?' continued Harry.

'Not frightened?' said Katie. 'Not at all. What an idea!'

'Really not?'

'No, really. Do you know, I'm rather fond of adventures.'

'But isn't this a little too serious?'

'Why, Mr. Rivers, I'm sure I think it's delightful. These men are Carlists, and all Carlists are gentlemen. I dote on Carlists—I do, really!'

'Well, so do I—if you do,' said Harry laughingly; 'only you must allow that it isn't a very gentlemanly thing to stop us on our journey, relieve us of our purses, and carry us off to parts unknown in a mule-cart.'

'Oh, you shouldn't look at it in that light. That's too awfully prosaic. Now I'm romantic, and I'm positively grateful to them for providing me with such a delightful little adventure.'

'Do you love adventures?'

'Love them?' replied Katie, with the drollest look in the world. 'Why, I positively dote on them!'

Her smile was so sweet, and her face so bewitching, that Harry thought he never saw any face so lovely.

'You see,' continued Katie, 'I mope and mope, and keep moping so! and things grow so tiresome, that I fairly ache for an adventure.'

'Well, but suppose that you were in an awful hurry to meet some one, and were stopped in this fashion?'

At this Katie's whole expression changed. She looked at Harry with a face full of sympathy, behind which there was visible the most intense curiosity.

'Oh, Mr. Rivers,' said she, 'I'm so sorry! And are you in a awful hurry to meet some one?'

'Awful!' said Harry.

'Oh, Mr. Rivers, I'm so sorry!' said Katie again. 'And would you tell me all about it, please?'

Now Harry was by nature inclined to make the world his confidant; and how much more was he ready to confide in such a one as Katie, who invited his confidence with such tender sympathy! Besides, he already felt, as has been said, quite like an old acquaintance. Ashby's relations to Katie made her seem nearer to him. She was his friend's betrothed. And then, to him, he had been chatting with her all day long.

'You see,' said he, 'I'm on the look-out for a friend.'

At this Katie smiled with indescribable comicality.

'Won't I do?' she asked.

Harry stared at her for a moment, and then burst into a laugh in which Katie joined merrily.

'I dare say now, Mr. Rivers,' said she, 'you think I'm too slight an acquaintance to be trusted; but, you know, in Spain when one meets with a fellow-countryman who can speak English why, you know, one can't help feeling quite like an old friend at that sort of thing; and, mind you, when one has been taken prisoner by the Carlists, one feels much more so, you know. But all the same, I hope you'll excuse me; I didn't mean any harm.'

At this Harry laughed still more.

'You're not mad?' said Katie, with a droll assumption of anxiety.

'Will you really be my friend?' asked Harry.

'Of course. Didn't I say as much?' said Katie.

'Then let's shake hands over it,' said Harry, 'and swear to eternal friendship.'

Saying this, he held out his hand, and Katie held out hers. Harry pressed it warmly and tenderly.

'Well,' said Harry, after a pause, 'I'll tell you all about it, for I want your—your sympathy, you know, and your advice, you know, and all that sort of thing, you know.'

'Well, do you know, Mr. Rivers,' said Katie, 'that's my strong point. I always have at my disposal any amount of sympathy, and as for advice, why, I could begin and go on advising, and advising, and advising, from now till—well, not to be too extravagant, I'll merely say till doomsday. So now, *won't* you begin?'

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CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH HARRY BECOMES CONFIDENTIAL, AND TELLS A VERY REMARKABLE STORY.

HARRY paused a little longer, and then said :

'Well, you see, the friend that I wanted to see is a lady.'

'Of course,' said Katie; 'that's a self-evident fact. I know that, and she is your lady-love. But I want to know all about her, and, first of all, her name.'

'I didn't think that you thought I was thinking of a lady,' said Harry.

'What a ridiculous observation!' said Katie; 'and I know you only say that to tease me, when you know I'm so curious about this friend of yours.'

'Well,' said Harry, 'in the first place, her name is Talbot.'

'Talbot? What else?'

'Sydney—Sydney Talbot.'

'Sydney Talbot! But that isn't a girl's name; it's a man's name.'

'At any rate,' said Harry, 'it's her name.'

'Well, but hasn't she some pet name—something more feminine, such as "Minnie," for instance, or "Nellie," or "Kittie," or "Florry," or something of that sort?'

'No; her only name is Sydney Talbot. You see, Sydney is a family name, and had to be perpetuated. She had no brothers, and so it was given to her. Her father's name was also Sydney Talbot, and her grandfather's, and—'

'And her great-grandfather's,' chimed in Katie, 'and so on up to Noah; but his name, at any rate, was not Sydney Talbot. Now this is a very romantic beginning, so go on. I will only remark that I intend to be great friends with your wife some day, and that I've made up my mind to call her "Syddie." She is actually pining for a pet name. But what do you call her?'

'I? Oh, I call her Miss Talbot.'

'Miss! You call her Miss—Talbot? What a horrible idea! And you pretend to love her!' cried Katie reproachfully.

'Well—but you know, Sydney is too stiff.'

'Then why not invent a name? Call her "Poppet," or "Topsy," or "Fifine," or "Rosie," or "Gracie." Why, I could supply you with fifty or sixty names on the spot. But this is all idle trifling. Go on and tell me more. Give a full and complete account of yourself and your "own one."'

'Well, you know, I'm doing business in Barcelona, and we were engaged to be married last year.'

'Did you see her last in Barcelona?'

'No, in England, last year. I met her in London.'

'Have you not seen her since?'

'No. We have corresponded ever since, and this marriage was arranged by letter.'

'Oh, but you're not married yet?' said Katie, in a low voice.

'No,' said Harry, 'and heaven only knows when we ever shall be.'

'Why?'

'Oh, well—because there's been such a muddle about it all. You see, I proposed, and was accepted, in the usual course of things.'

'Ah, now, Mr. Rivers,' said Katie, 'that's not fair!'

'Fair! what isn't fair?'

'Why, you're skipping all the best part.'

'The best part? I don't understand.'

'Well, I mean you're leaving out all the love parts. I want to hear all about your love-affair—how you first saw her; how you felt; how she treated you; how you were tormented by the pangs of jealousy, agitated by hope and fear, until you knew that she was yours. And you have the heart to skip all this, and go on to the stupid, commonplace end of it!'

Harry laughed.

'Well,' said he, 'the end of my case has not yet come; and the farther on I go the more exciting it grows. But I'll tell you all if you want me to. Shall I begin at the beginning, and tell you how I first became acquainted with her?'

'Yes, yes, do!' said Katie eagerly.

'Well, it was at sea, in a tremendous gale, when we both were face to face with death.'

At this Katie threw up her eyes, clasped her hands, and exclaimed:

'Oh, how perfectly *ex-quisite*! how utterly delicious! how quite too awfully jolly! But when? where? Oh, *do go on*!'

'It was aboard the steamer from Marseilles to Leghorn. During the night after leaving a furious storm arose. The steamer was an old rattletrap, and soon began to leak fearfully. I was in my berth, trying to sleep, when at last I was roused by a yell from all the crew and passengers. I rushed out and on deck, and saw the sea all breaking in foam over the vessel. The passengers and crew were all mixed up in a wild, confused mass, trying to scramble into the boats. This was made visible by lightning flashes at intervals, after which everything would become as black as night. I saw that nothing could be done, so I took my station near the mizen shrouds, and held on there, waiting for the end. While here I saw a female figure crouching down under the bulwarks and clinging there. Partly

out of pity, and partly for the sake of having something to do, I helped her up to her feet, held her up in that position, and told her to cling to the shrouds, and stay by me as long as she possibly could. At length, in the midst of a flash of lightning, I happened to notice that the jolly-boat was hanging from the davits astern. No one was near : every one was running about forward. I determined to make an effort for life. The woman was almost senseless, so I half carried, half dragged her to the boat and got her in. Then I passed a line around the seat of the boat and secured her to it ; after which I began to lower the boat down. This was a deuced hard job, but I managed it at last. Then I jumped in and cut the line that held us, and away we went in the boat, which was sent spinning along like a feather over the boiling sea. I don't know how we kept afloat, but we did. The woman never spoke one word. So we passed a fearful night, and at length morning came. Then the woman began to cry bitterly. I soothed her as well as I could. We were in a terrible situation. The storm had nearly gone down, but we were threatened with something worse, for we had neither water nor provisions. I gave my companion some brandy, which revived her. We were far away out of sight of land, and no sails were visible anywhere. I had a couple of oars, and with these I pulled toward the north. My companion soon regained her composure and her strength, and we were able to discuss our prospects. She told me her name and destination. She was on her way to Rome to join her father, in company with an aged relative and her maid. Her father had been ill, and had been living in Italy for his health. She was anxious about him, but still more troubled about her relative, who had been left on board the steamer.

'Miss Talbot was very beautiful, and the most unselfish person I ever saw. She was perpetually trying to lighten my labour. She insisted on taking an oar and trying to row. She bore up most uncomplainingly against our hardships. In fact, she acted like a regular brick. Of course, before I had talked with her half an hour I was head over heels in love with her.'

'But it's awfully nice to have your live saved, and be alone together in a boat like that,' said Katie.

She spoke in an injured tone, as though a shipwreck was something highly desirable, which a harsh fate had cruelly kept away from her.

'Well,' continued Harry, 'we starved, and starved, and choked with thirst, for two or three days ; but she never uttered one single murmur.'

'I should think not,' said Katie. 'What had she to complain of? What more could she want? Why, it was utterly lovely! I'm sure I shouldn't care to eat one single bit if I were in such a

situation. I could not be hungry at such times—I never am Hungry, indeed !

The idea was too absurd, so Katie dismissed it with scorn.

‘I could see,’ continued Harry, ‘that she was suffering. Her face grew paler and paler. She was evidently growing weaker. She looked at me piteously——’

‘Oh, you will be so prosaic !’ interrupted Katie. ‘Can’t you see that it wasn’t hunger at all ? It’s the old, old story :

“Then her cheek was pale, and thinner
Than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions
With a mute observance hung.”

‘And I said,’ continued Katie—

“And I said, my dearest Pard’ner,
Speak, and speak the truth to me ;
Trust me, Pard’ner ; all the current
Of my being turns to thee.”

‘The fact is,’ she added abruptly, ‘I believe you’re making up nearly the whole of this !’

‘Making it up !’ cried Harry. ‘Me ! Why ?’

‘Why, because such delightful situations never do occur in real life. It’s only in fiction.’

‘No, really now—it was really so,’ said Harry. ‘Why should I make this up ? Really, on my honour——’

‘Well, you’re colouring the facts, at least,’ said Katie. ‘If it’s all true, I think it’s hard on poor people like me, that never can find any pleasant excitement to break the monotony of life. But never mind—please go on.’

‘Well,’ continued Harry, ‘we drifted on for several days. We saw vessels, but they were too far away to see us. At last we came in sight of land, and there we were picked up by a boat that took us to Leghorn. I then went on with Miss Talbot to Rome. I learned that we were the only ones that had been saved out of the ill-fated steamer. Miss Talbot’s father, who, as I said, was an invalid, had heard the news, and, thinking his daughter lost, sank under the blow. On our arrival at Rome he was dead. It was a mournful end to our journey.

‘He was buried in Rome. Miss Talbot returned to England with an English family, with whom her father had been acquainted. I did not intrude on her just then, but paid her a visit afterward. At that time we came to an understanding, and then I went back to Barcelona. And now I come to the real point of my story—the thing that I was going to tell you.’

‘Oh, I’m so very much obliged,’ said Katie, ‘for what you’ve told me thus far !’

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Now, Miss Talbot, you must know, has very few relatives. She's the last of an ancient family, and one or two uncles and aunts are all that are left besides herself. Her life has been by no means gay, or even cheerful, and perhaps that was one reason why she was willing to accept me.'

How delightful it is,' said Katie, 'to see such perfect modesty !

Mr. Rivers, you are almost too diffident to live !'

Oh, but really, I mean that a girl like Miss Talbot, with her wealth, and ancient family, and social standing, and all that, might have the pick of all the best fellows in the country.'

That stands to reason ; and so you imply that when such a lady chose you, you——'

Ah, now, Miss Westlorton, I didn't,' said Harry. 'I'm not so infernally conceited as all that, you know.'

But hadn't she promised in the boat ?'

In the boat ! Well, yes——'

Of course : then why did she have to choose you again ?'

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Oh, well—in the boat it was an informal sort of thing. But never mind. She promised to marry me, and I went back to Barcelona. We then corresponded for about a year.'

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'How awfully dreary !' sighed Katie. 'I do so detest letter-writing ! If I had to write letters, I would break the engagement.'

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Well, it's a bother, of course,' said Harry ; 'but, after all, a letter is the only substitute one can have for the absent one.'

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And how long is it since you last saw her ?'

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A year ! Why, you must have utterly forgotten what she looks like. Should you be able to recognise her if you were to meet her in a crowd ?'

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Oh yes,' said Harry, with a laugh. 'Now you must know that when I was engaged I expected to go to England in about three months' time to get married. Business, however, detained me. I hoped to go again a few months later. But the fact is, I found it impossible ; and so on for a whole year I was detained, until at last I had to write, imploring her to come out to me and be married in Barcelona.'

At last we

Well, for my part, I never would marry a man unless he came to me,' said Katie.

by a boat

Then I'm glad,' said Harry, 'that you are not Miss Talbot. She was not so cruel as that ; for though at first she refused, she last consented and promised to come. This, however, was only after long begging on my part, and a full explanation of the difficulties of my position. So she consented, and finally named a certain day on which she would leave ; and that was out a fortnight ago.'

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Now, you know, all the time I felt awfully about her having

to come on alone, until at length, as ill-luck would have it, it happened that I was able to steal a few days from my business. So I determined, after all, to go on for her. Fool that I was didn't telegraph! There was no time to write, of course. You see, I was such an idiot that I only thought of giving her a pleasant surprise. This filled my mind and occupied all my thoughts, and all the way on I was chuckling to myself over my scheme; and I kept fancying how delighted she would be finding that, after all, she would not have to make the journey alone. I was so full of this that I couldn't think of anything else. And now I should like to ask you calmly, Miss Westlotorn, a simple question: Did you ever hear in all your life of such a perfect and unmitigated chuckle-head?

'Never!' said Katie in a demure tone.

'Well,' continued Harry ruefully, 'luck was against me. I met with several delays of a tedious kind, and lost in all about ten days. At last I got to my destination, and then—then—in a word, there came a thunder-clap. What do you think?

'What?'

'She was gone!'

'Gone?'

'Yes. She had gone the day before my arrival. She had written again, and had telegraphed. She had then set out expecting me to receive her with all a lover's eagerness at Barcelona, at the hotel which I had mentioned to her in my last letter, and hoping also that I might possibly turn up at the station after passing the Pyrenees. What do you think of that? Wasn't that a blow? And was it my fault?

'Certainly not,' said Katie in a soothing voice. 'Not your fault, only your misfortune. But what did her friends say?'

'Her friends? Oh, they were awfully indignant, of course, but I couldn't wait to explain it all to them. The moment I found out how it was, I turned on my heel and hurried back to Barcelona. I travelled night and day. I got there without any interruption, and rushed to the hotel, where, according to the direction, she was to have gone.'

'Well,' asked Katie, as Harry paused, 'was she there?'

'No,' said Harry; 'but, worst of all, she had been there! Yes, she had been there. She had made the journey; she had reached Barcelona; and I—I, for whom she had come, I was not there to meet her. Well, when I did get back she was gone.'

'Gone?—gone where?'

'Why, where else could she have gone but home again?'

'True. Being a girl of spirit, she never could stand such treatment as that. But did she leave no message for you?'

'Not a word, either in writing or in any other way. I asked the hotel people about her, but they knew nothing in particular.

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She had not told anything about herself. She had come, and, after two or three days, had gone. She had gone only the day before I got back.'

'And you, of course, must have started after her all the way back to England, and that's the reason why you are here—'

'Yes,' said Harry: 'the only hope I had was to overtake the train that preceded me. It was not impossible that it might be delayed, and that my train should come up with hers. That was my only hope, but of course all this is now up.'

'Oh, well,' said Katie, in a consoling tone, 'you'll see her again before long, and you can explain it all; and when she finds out that it all arose from an excess of zeal, she will see that your fault was one on the right side, and she will love you all the better. And so you will both have many and many a laugh over this queer misadventure; and it will be something that will give flavour and spice to all your future life. Why, I'd give anything to have just such an adventure—I would, really. I wish I was in Miss Talbot's place. I quite envy her—I do, really; that is,' she added, with a little confusion, 'her adventure, you know.'

'You have such a nice way of putting things,' said Harry, 'that I wish I could always have you to go to for sympathy.'

'Sympathy?' said Katie. 'Oh, you know, that's quite my forte.'

Harry looked into her clear, sunny eyes as they were raised to his, full of brightness, and archness, and joyousness.

'And won't you let me call you "Katie,"' said he, 'just while we're travelling together? I feel so awfully well acquainted with you, you know; and I've told you all about my affairs, you know, just as if you were my oldest friend.'

'I should like it above all things,' said Katie. 'I hate to be called Miss Westlotorn by my friends. It's too formal.'

'And you must call me "Harry,"' said this volatile young man.

'You will, now, won't you?' he added in a coaxing tone.

Katie did not prove obdurate.

'Well—Harry,' she said with a bewitching smile.

'I think you're awfully nice,' said Harry.

'Well, I'm sure I think you're a very nice boy,' said Katie in a childish way.

For some time longer the party continued their journey. Harry and Katie found walking so much pleasanter than riding in the rude cart that they refused to get into the vehicle again, although urged to do so very strongly both by Mr. and Mrs. Russell. For his part, Harry declared that he infinitely preferred walking; and Katie, on being appealed to, said that the jolts of the wagon made her head ache. So these two continued their walk.

Gradually it grew darker, and the twilight deepened with the rapidity common in southern latitudes. Then, fearing lest Katie

might be fatigued, Harry made her take his arm. After this, being still full of anxious fears lest so fair and fragile a being might sink under the wearisome tramp, he took her little hand as it lay on his arm, and held it in his for all the rest of the way. And what Ashby would have said or thought if he had seen that is more than I can tell, I'm sure.

The moon was shining, and its brilliancy was wonderful. Now they entered among the mountains. Far on high ascended the lofty wooded slopes on one side, while on the other they descended into a valley. Beyond this there were other heights, while in the valley between there was a beautiful winding river. A turn in the road brought them at length to a place where the valley widened, and far away, shining like silver in the moonbeams, flowed the river,

'With many a winding through the vale.'

All around rose an amphitheatre of hills, some wooded, some precipitous, and behind these rose the summits of loftier mountains far into the sky. Here, full before them, there arose a grand and stately castle. Perched upon the crest of a spur where it projected from the flank of a mountain, it stood before the newcomers the centre of the whole scene, the crown and glory of it all. In the garish sunlight there might have been perceptible many and many a mark wrought by the destructive hand of time, for ages had passed since it first reared its lordly form on high. Its architecture spoke of hoar antiquity, of a time long past, when the Moor still fought around these scenes, and rushed to the fight to the war-cry of 'Allah Akbar!' But now, bathed in the mellow moonlight, this ancient castle showed all its grand proportions, with not a trace of decay or desolation; and its massive walls arose in solemn majesty; its battlements frowned in heavy shadows overhead; its lofty towers and turrets seemed still able to defy the assaults of time for ages yet to come.

For some time past the country had been growing steadily wilder and less peopled, until here there seemed a virtual solitude. On reaching the spot the party found a massive gateway with a ponderous portal. Beyond this opened the courtyard, and in the distance rose the keep. Here lights shone, and the noise of revelry came to their ears. And now the prisoners entered, and were taken in charge by others, and Ashby, who arrived about an hour afterward, was also taken to his quarters.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THE SPANISH PRIEST MEETS WITH A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

THE train, which had been released by the Carlists, went on its way, and after running about ten miles, came to a little town. Here a long stay was made, during which information was received of so serious a character that it was resolved, for the present, at least, not to go any farther. In the first place, the train which had immediately preceded had halted at the next station beyond, and this train could not move until the other had started; but, in addition to this, there came reports of all sorts, to the effect that the whole country was swarming with Carlists, who had occupied the lines of railroad and cut the telegraph wires. It was the latter circumstance that was most troublesome, since it made it impossible to get any definite information.

The end of it was, that the passengers had to shift for themselves, and find shelter and occupation as best they could, until they should be able to go on to their destinations: of which passengers only two need be mentioned here, namely, Captain Lopez and the priest. The former, having been thus rudely separated from Katie, had no object in going any farther, and therefore was quite willing to remain in this place. But it soon appeared that he had plenty to do. He at once set forth to communicate with the civil and military authorities, in the hope of obtaining assistance toward rescuing Katie from her captivity; and such was his zeal and energy, that before long he had received the most earnest promises of assistance and co-operation from all to whom he applied. As for the priest aforesaid, he had a different purpose, and that purpose did not lead him to make any effort to procure lodgings. He refreshed himself with a repast at the nearest hosteria, after which, girding up his loins, he left the place by the high-road.

The road at first ran through the plain, where, on every side, there stretched away fields of brown grass, with flocks of sheep and goats. The attendants upon these were nowhere visible, and this lack of human life and action gave to the country an indescribable air of solitude and desertion. In other respects, however, there was everything which could gratify the eye and the ear. The land was fertile, the soil cultivated, the scenery beautiful. Tall trees—the mulberry and the poplar—arose in long lines; and there the cactus stretched forth its thorny arms, and at intervals there appeared the dark green of extensive olive-groves. And the traveller there extended a wall of purple hills, and before him arose the giant heights of the Pyrenees. Among these the road at length entered, and, winding along at the base of the hills, it ascended very gradually.

The priest walked onward at a long, slinging pace, which to the experienced pedestrian. For three hours he kept this being too intent upon his progress, and upon his own thought to pay much attention to the scenery, except so far as was need for purposes of precaution. Save for this, the external form, nature and the many beauties around him were disregarded, and at length, after three hours, he sat down to rest at a rock the wayside. Sitting here, he drew forth from his pocket a used pipe, which he filled and lighted; after which he smoking, and surveying, in a contemplative manner, the scene before him.

It was, in truth, a scene well worthy of contemplation. In many a mile the eye of the beholder could rove over the course of the Ebro, and take in the prospect of one of the fairest landscapes in all the world. He had advanced high enough to overlook the valley, which lay behind him, with lines of hills in the distance while in front arose the mountains, dark in the heavy shade. To the west the country spread away until, in the far distance, it ended in a realm of glory. For here the sun was sinking in a wide basin formed by a break in the lines of mountains, filling all with fire and splendour; and while the hollow between the hills was thus filled with flame, immediately above this there were piled up vast masses of heavy strata clouds, of fantastic shapes and intense blackness. Above these the sky grew clearer, and was still overlaid with thin streaks of cirrus clouds, which were tinted with every hue of the rainbow, and spread over all the western heavens up to the zenith and beyond.

In that low mass of strata clouds which overhung the sun there was now a wild convulsion. A storm was raging there too far away to be felt, but plainly visible. The fantastic shapes were flung together in furious disorder; through the confused masses electric flashes shot forth; sometimes in floods of gold, sometimes in straight lines of forked lightning, sometimes in rounded lumps of suddenly revealed fire—the true bolts of Jove. Toward the south the hills lay wrapped in haze and gloom, and in one part there was a heavy shower, where the rain streamed down in vertical lines.

The sun went down, leaving behind it a redder splendour which all was glorified; the river wound in molten gold; the trees were tipped with purple lustre; the crests of the mountains took on aureoles of light. As the sun still descended, the scene was slowly transformed; the splendour lessened; the clouds broke up into other forms; the thick strata mass dissipated itself, then came a golden haze over the wide west; the moon revealed itself over the head of Scorpio, with Antares beaming from its bright place in the sky.

The scenes shifted rapidly, and twilight deepened, until

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clouds made way for the moon, and, breaking up into thin light masses, swept away over the sky ; while the moon, assuming its proper functions, looked mildly down, and bathed all the valley in a mellow lustre.

After about half an hour's rest, the priest arose, put his pipe in his pocket, and resumed his long stride. Up the road he went, without stopping again, as though he had resolved to cross the Pyrenees in that one night, and be over in France by morning : whom it might be said, in the words of the Chinese poet,

'That young man walkes no can stop.'

Another hour brought him a good four miles farther on, and still he kept up the same pace. He now reached a place where the road took a somewhat sudden turn, and wound around a rocky projection on the hill-side. Here, as he turned, he came full upon a figure that was walking in the opposite direction.

It was the figure of a woman ; and in that bright moonshine it was easy to see that she was young, and graceful, and light, and elastic. Coming suddenly upon the priest as she did, at the turn in the road, she was evidently quite terrified. Her attitude was that of a stealthy fugitive ; and as she met him there was, in her sudden involuntary gesture, the appearance of one who has been captured by a pursuer. For an instant she recoiled in an agony of terror, but then one glance at the costume of the priest seemed to reassure her ; and then, clasping her hands, she came nearer, and said, in tremulous tones :

'Padre ! padre ! per l'amor de Dios soccorre me !'

The priest looked at her for a few moments in silence. Then he spoke :

'Etes-vous Française, mademoiselle ?'

The woman shook her head.

'E ella Italiana ?'

Again she shook her head.

'Sind sie Deutsch ?'

Another shake of the head, and then she said :

'Yo soy Inglesa.'

The priest gave a long whistle.

'English !' he cried ; 'English ! Then in future please be kind enough to speak English, for your Spanish—is—well, declined with thanks.'

At these words the woman started, and then, with an uncontrollable impulse, seized the hand of the priest in a convulsive grasp.

'Oh !' she cried, 'are you really—really an Englishman ? Oh, thank heaven ! thank heaven ! Then you will help me ?'

'English ?' said the priest ; 'well, for the matter of that, I'm anything you please just now, in this infernal country. I cer-

tainly do speak English, but at the same time I prefer calling myself what I am—namely, an American.'

This loquacity of the priest made no impression upon the woman, who was absorbed now by her one idea of escape, obtaining help, of flight.

'Oh, sir,' she continued, 'can you help me? Can I go on this road? Do you know what I can do? Will you tell me?'

'Oh yes,' said the priest, 'I'll tell you. I do not know what you can do. What can you do? You can read, perhaps, and suppose you can play the piano, and crochet; but I know what you cannot do—you cannot speak Spanish.'

These words were spoken with the indifferent air of one who is thinking of something else.

'Ah, sir,' said the woman, in a tone of anguish, 'don't mock at me! I'm in distress unspeakable. I've—I've lost my way!'

She could scarcely speak from agitation. The priest was silent for a moment. Then he drew a long breath.

'Lost your way?' said he. 'Well, that is queer too. Your way—and what way can that be in times like these, and here in this country, and, above all, in this part of the country? Are you walking for a wager? Are you going round the world in a bee-line? Do you carry a portable canoe?'

'I was in the diligence,' said the woman, not choosing to notice such ill-timed levity, 'and we were stopped—by the Carlists—and I escaped—and I'm trying to find my way to some safe place—but I cannot—I cannot.'

'H'm!' said the priest, 'that is a coincidence too—just my own case to a T. I've been captured by the Carlists too, and I've escaped, and I'm now making a bolt for a place of safety. Well, this does beat my grandmother, I must say!'

The lady was too full of her own troubles to notice the peculiar expressions of the priest. She merely continued, as before, to beg for help.

'Oh, sir,' said she, 'do you know the way here? and can you help me?'

'Well,' said the priest, 'I know some of it, I may say, but that depends on what you mean by knowing it. But will you allow me to ask you one or two questions? In the first place, where did you come from last?'

'Last?' said the lady; 'the last place I came from was Barcelona.'

'When?'

'Yesterday.'

'You spoke of a diligence. You must have come from Barcelona by train.'

'Of course.'

'Then that must have been the train that stopped over there.'

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'Yes; the train stopped. I understood that it was not going on any farther for a long time, for that the track was torn up. A diligence was prepared for those passengers who were anxious to go on immediately, and I was most eager to proceed without delay, so as to get to my home as soon as possible. So, early this morning, we left, and came, without any incident of any kind, until we reached a place about five miles away. There we were stopped and robbed. I believe all the passengers were detained and held as prisoners—at least, I myself was. I was handed over to the care of a peasant woman, who took me to a cottage. About two hours ago she came to me and told me that I might go, and urged me to fly at once. I could not understand her very well, for I know very little Spanish indeed, but I could see that she was sorry for me, and offered me this chance of escape. It was also quite evident that she considered me in great danger, and was frightened about me. I felt deeply grateful, and offered her a gold locket which had escaped the notice of the robbers, but she refused it. So then I started off. I've come along the road ever since, and have seen no one except yourself. And now, sir,' continued the lady, looking at the priest with intense earnestness, 'can you help me? Will you? Oh, for the love of—'

Here the priest interrupted her. The lady had spoken in a low voice, which had a very mournful cadence, and besides this, there were signs of deep emotion in the tremulous tones and the agitated manner. Her flight had been a long and a hurried one; the exertion had been severe; her strength had been put forth to the utmost; she was on the verge of utter exhaustion. Everything in her appearance, voice, and manner, combined to inspire pity and sympathy. The good priest had seemed not unmoved as she was speaking, and now he interrupted her, raising his hand, and speaking in a very gentle voice.

'Ah, now,' said he, 'come—none of that! Do you think me a savage, that you must pray to me for mercy? Help you!' he repeated in stronger tones. 'Ay, madame, that will I, and with the last drop of my heart's blood and to my life's end. There, is that strong enough? Help you!'—and he gave a short laugh—'that's good, too! Why, what else have I been thinking of ever since I met you? What else can you suppose that I intend to do? Isn't it enough for me to see your distress? But come—it isn't quite so safe as it might be, and enemies may be lurking near. We must first find a place of retirement, where we can decide on what is best to be done.'

The tones of the priest's voice were now totally different from those which he had employed hitherto. These were harsh, dry, indifferent, almost mocking; but now they were full of sincere feeling and unmistakable truth. Their effect upon the lady was

very marked and strong. She clasped her hands, bowed her head, and in her weakness was unable to bear up under this new revulsion of feeling; so she burst into tears and stood there weeping.

At this the priest was not a little embarrassed. For a moment he seemed about to try to soothe her; but he checked this impulse and looked away, whistling softly to himself. After a few moments he went on, speaking in a gentle voice:

'I've been going along alone easily enough, but now, if you will come with me, I shall have to make some changes in my plans. You see, two cannot travel so easily as one; and then you are a lady, and an English lady too, which in these parts means a wealthy foreigner—an object of plunder. You, as an English lady, run an amount of risk to which I, as a Spanish priest, am not at all exposed. So you see we can no longer remain in so public a place as this high-road. We must seek some secure place, at least, for the present. You don't seem able to go much farther. This moonlight night is just the time for flight, but you need rest now, and unless you get that first you won't be able to escape at all. And so—what do you say to my hunting up a hiding-place for the night?'

As the priest began to speak, the lady had made a violent effort to recover herself, and had succeeded well enough to listen attentively, only showing by an occasional sigh or sob that her distress had not yet passed away altogether. At the priest's question she paused thoughtfully for a short time, and then said:

'My being with you will make a great difference to you?'

'Oh yes,' said the priest.

'It will perhaps endanger your safety,' continued the lady anxiously.

'Oh, that is nothing,' said the priest; 'that is my normal state. I am always in danger.'

'Still, I should be sorry to add to your danger,' she said hesitatingly; 'and if—if—'

'Well,' said the priest sharply, 'if what?'

'If I am a source of danger,' said the lady calmly, 'I should prefer going on alone, just as I was; and I shall only ask you to tell me what is the nearest town, and to give me generally the direction to it.'

'Oh, you will, will you?' said the priest, in the mocking tone which he had previously used. 'Well, then, madame, I shall only ask you to do as I say, and ask no questions. I know the country—you don't. I have registered a vow in heaven to save you, and save you I will, even in spite of all your teeth. I swear it in the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!'

At these strange words the lady was silent for a few moments,

and then said, in a tremulous voice : ' I'll do anything that you wish me to do.'

' Furthermore, my hearer,' continued the priest, suddenly assuming and immediately dropping the whine of a rustic preacher, ' mark this—I don't mind saying a few words to ease your scruples : you cannot make my position any more dangerous than it is already. I carry my life in my hand all the time.'

' Still,' said the lady, ' you can easily take care of yourself ; but what a terrible thing it would be if you should get into trouble on my account !'

' Well, I'll ask only one question—what is your calling in life ?'

' I have no calling. I'm a lady——'

' Spinster ?' said the priest in a mild voice.

' Yes,' said the lady gravely, and with deep sadness.

It seemed to the priest that he had unwittingly touched upon a tender point.

' Pardon me,' said he, ' this is all I wish to get at. You are not a politician, not a political agent, not a spy ?'

' Certainly not.'

' Nor a newspaper correspondent ?'

' No.'

' Not even an artist ?'

' No ; nothing but a simple English lady, and only anxious to get back home.'

' Very well—very good !' said the priest approvingly. ' And you shall go home, too ; but remember what I said, and trust in me. And now let us see what we had better do. I've been here before, all through and through this country, and know it like a book. Now, just over there, a little to the west, there is an old unoccupied castle, which is in very good condition, considering it's a thousand years old. It is just the place for us.' Unfortunately, there may be others in it, for it is held from time to time by the one or the other of the fighting factions ; yet even in that case I know of an odd corner or two where we can elude observation for the present ; for it is a very—a monstrously large castle, and I happen to know the ins and outs of it pretty well. I can assure you a good night's rest there.'

' It is not inhabited, you say.'

' No, not as a general thing.'

' I'm sorry for that. If it were, the people would perhaps give us shelter and food, and help us on our way.'

' The people would perhaps give us more shelter than we care for. But come, we ought to be off, for you need rest, and that soon.'

The lady said nothing, but walked along with the priest. For about a quarter of a mile they followed the road, and then turned away to the left over the country. Here their pathway

lay over the flank of the mountain, and traversed open fields which were used for pasture. The moon shone brightly, illuminating the scene, and the priest walked with the assured air of one who knew his way thoroughly.

The lady, who all along had seemed much fatigued, now began to give more evident signs of distress. The priest made her take his arm: she did so, and for a time was relieved. He sought to cheer her with encouraging words. She responded nobly, and certainly made all the effort in her power; but her strength had that day been too sorely tasked, and threatened to fail her utterly. At last she sank to the ground, and sat there while the priest waited patiently.

'Courage!' said he. 'Cheer up! We shall soon be there now.'

After a short rest the lady recovered a little, and made a final effort. They walked on as before, the lady holding the priest's arm, and moving forward by dint of desperate exertions. Still they went until at last there appeared immediately ahead a massive tower, which seemed to arise from behind some trees.

'There it is,' said the priest. 'One more effort.'

But the lady could go no farther. She sank down on the ground once more, with something like a groan.

'I can go no farther,' said she in a faint voice.

The priest made no reply, but stood for some time in silence watching her. It was evident that he hoped for another rally of her powers, but he was disappointed; for the lady sat with her head bowed down, trembling, weeping, and all unnerved. Time passed, and there was no revival of strength.

'Madame!' said the priest at length, in a harsh and constrained voice. At this the lady gave a sigh, and tried to raise herself, but without success. After a useless effort she sank down again. 'Madame,' said the priest, 'to stay here is out of the question. We have not much farther to go; the place of our destination is not far off, and I am going to carry you there.'

'No,' said the lady, 'you must not. I—I—'

'Madame,' interrupted the other, 'as a priest, it is my duty to succour the distressed, and even as a man I should feel bound to save you.'

'It's too much for you,' said the lady faintly. 'Save yourself. It's no matter—what—becomes of—of me.'

'Oh, it isn't, isn't it?' said the priest in his dryest manner. 'Well, you will please remember that you and I are in the same boat, and we must win or lose together. And so, as I don't intend to be captured yet awhile, why, madame, with your permission, and begging your pardon, I'll take the liberty of saving you in my own way. At the same time, please remember that it's not for your sake I'm doing this so much as for my own.'

What possible meaning there might be to these last words, the

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priest did not explain, nor did the lady understand. In fact, there was no time for explanation. The priest, without any more ado, raised the lady in his arms and marched off with her. He was not a very large man, but he was very muscular, and in excellent training; so he trudged on at a pace which, under all the circumstances, was really wonderful. Fortunately he did not have very far to carry his burden. Before long he came to a grove of large trees, which stood wide apart and admitted of an easy passage. Traversing this, he at length reached a low tower, which was in a half-ruinous condition. It stood upon the brink of a deep chasm, the sides of which were densely wooded, while at the bottom there was a brawling brook. Upon the other side of the chasm appeared the outline of a stately castle, with walls, and towers, and battlements, and keep, all plainly discernible as they rose up in giant proportions.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH THE PRIEST SEES A VISION, AND GOES IN SEARCH OF A BREAKFAST.

THE priest placed the lady on the ground near the trunk of a fallen tree, against which she might lean, and then, turning away, he drew a clasp-knife from his pocket, and began cutting armfuls of brushwood and twigs of shrubs. These he carried into the tower and spread over the floor with the skill of a practised hand, while the lady sat where he had left her, with her head bowed down, taking no notice of anything, and seeming like one who was quite prostrated in mind as well as in body. When at last the priest's task was ended, he went to her and carried her inside the tower.

'Here,' said he, 'is some brushwood. I'm sorry that there isn't anything better, but better is a stone couch with liberty than a bed of down with captivity. Don't be worried or frightened. If there is any danger, I'll sound the alarm in Zion and get you off in time.'

The lady murmured some inarticulate words, and the priest then left her and went outside. He there spent some little time in gathering some brush for himself, which he spread upon the grass, under the castle wall; after which he seated himself upon it, and pulling out his pipe, he filled it and began to smoke. Hitherto he had been too much preoccupied to pay any very close attention to the world around; but now, as he sat there, he became aware of sounds which arose apparently from the interior of the great castle on the other side of the chasm. The sounds did not startle him in the least, however, and he was evidently

prepared for something of this sort. Between this tower and the great castle there intervened the deep chasm; and though no doubt the two structures had once been connected, yet all connection had long since been destroyed, and now there was no visible way of passing from the one to the other. The priest, therefore, felt as secure as though he were miles away, and listened serenely to the noises. There came to his ears sounds of singing, and laughter, and revelry, with shouts and cries that rang out upon the air of night. There seemed to be no small stir in the castle, as though a multitude had gathered there, and had given themselves up securely to general merriment. But all this troubled not the priest one whit, for he calmly finished his pipe, and then, laying it down, he disposed his limbs in a comfortable position, still keeping a sitting posture, and in this attitude he fell asleep, and slept the sleep of the just.

Very early on the following morning our good priest opened his eyes, and the first object that they rested upon was the lady, who stood there full before him, and greeted him with a gentle smile. The priest had not seen her very well on the previous evening, and now, as he saw her face in full daylight, it seemed different from that which had met his view under the moonbeams. The lady was of slender form, a trifle over the middle height, and of marked dignity of bearing. Her face was perfectly beautiful in the outline of its features, but this was as nothing when compared with the refined and exquisite grace, the perfect breeding, the quick intelligence, and the womanly tenderness that were all expressed in those noble lineaments. It was a face full of calm self-possession, and gave indications of a great and gracious nature, which could be at once loving and brave, and tender and true. Her hair, which was very luxuriant, was closely bound up in dark auburn masses; her lips were full of sweet sensitiveness; and thus she stood looking at him with dark hazel eyes that seemed to glow with feeling and intelligence, till the good priest thought that never in all his life had he seen anything half so fair. In fact, so overcome was he that he sat staring at her for some time without one word, and without giving any response whatever to the pleasant words of greeting which she spoke.

'I'm very sorry, indeed,' said she, as the priest still stared in silence at her, 'that I was such a trouble to you, after all your—your kindness; but the fact is, I was so wretchedly fatigued that I was scarcely responsible for my actions. It was too selfish in me; but now I mean to make amends, and help you in every possible way. Would you like me to do anything? Sha'n't I get breakfast?'

She spoke these words with a smile, in which, however, there was not a little sadness. There was nothing in the words themselves beyond that painful consideration for others and forgetful-

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ness of self which the priest had observed in her the night before ; but the voice was a wonderful one—a round, full contralto, yet soft and low, with a certain mysteriously tremulous undertone that fell with a thrill upon his ear. The priest started up.

‘Breakfast!’ said he, with a short laugh. ‘That is the very thing I was thinking of myself. I consider that an all-important subject.’

‘It is certainly a serious matter,’ said she.

‘And you propose to get it for me?’

‘Yes,’ said she, with a faint smile, ‘if I can.’

‘I really wish you would,’ continued the priest, ‘for it would save me from a great responsibility ; for if you don’t get it for me, hang me if I know where I can get any for myself.’

‘What do you mean?’ said she. ‘Have we nothing to eat?’

‘Well, not so bad as that. I have a bit of a sandwich, I believe, and you may have it.’

With this he produced from his pocket a tin sandwich case and offered it to her. She refused.

‘If that is the last that you have,’ said she, ‘I can wait.’

‘But you must eat it, so as to get back your strength.’

‘And what will you do?’

‘Oh, I’m an old hand at fasting. It’s my business.’

‘As priest, I suppose?’ said the lady, with a smile that was brighter, or rather less mournful, than any which the priest had thus far seen on her melancholy face.

‘Yes, as priest,’ said the other dryly. ‘And now will you take it?’

‘Do you ever think about yourself?’ asked the lady, in a low voice, in which the thrill was more perceptible than usual.

‘About myself? Oh yes,’ said he; ‘I never think of anything else. My motto is to take care of Number One. It’s only for my own sake that I’m anxious for you to eat; but if you won’t take it all, why, you’ll have to be content with half. You won’t refuse to share with me and take half?’

‘By no means. I sha’n’t object to take the half, if you choose.’

‘Well,’ said he, ‘that’s fair; so let’s begin our breakfast. Would you mind sitting on that tree over there?’

He led the way to the fallen tree already mentioned, and the two seated themselves. He then opened the tin case and drew forth a few sandwiches. From these they made their frugal repast.

‘You must cultivate patience,’ said the priest, as he ate. ‘I know exactly what’s in your mind. You want to be off. But, according to the proverb, the more haste the less speed. Tell me—would you rather be here or in the hands of the Carlists?’

‘Here.’

‘Well, I’m afraid if we move incautiously we may be seen and

captured by the Carlists. So before we start I propose to reconnoitre. Will you remain here ?

'I will do whatever you direct.'

'You are very good and sensible.'

'Thanks ; but where do you propose to go ?

'I'm going to visit the castle over there.'

'The castle ?

'Yes. It is full of people. That they are Carlists I haven't a doubt. I mean to visit them, and find out how the land lies.'

'But the danger is too great, is it not ? May they not detain you ?

'I must run the risk of that.'

'Was it your intention to go among the Carlists before you met me ?

'Well, not exactly. I was on my way, and that way might have led among them.'

'Are you running this risk for my sake ?

'Well, not particularly, although I have an eye to you in this matter. My chief aim is, just now, to get something for dinner, and after that to find out what is the safest direction for us to take.'

The lady sat in thoughtful silence for some time.

'I am afraid,' said she, 'that you are incurring a terrible risk. You are now out of danger ; why put yourself into it ? Why may we not fly now, or to-night ? I can fast for any length of time.'

'The danger is,' said the priest, 'that we may both fall into the hands of the very men we wish to avoid.'

'But that is the very thing you are going to do.'

'I—Oh, I can go alone anywhere.'

'Ah, there it is !' said the lady bitterly. 'It is I who am a drag on you. It is I who am getting you into danger. Yet why not leave me ? Tell me where the road is : I will go back alone.'

'Oh, well,' said the priest, with his usual short laugh, 'as for that, we may talk of it again. I'll tell you presently. It may come to that, but I hope not. I am going to that castle all the same. I've been there before, and without harm : I expect to come back. But suppose I do not, how long will you wait here for me ?

'As long as you say.'

'Twenty-four hours ?

'Yes.'

'Very well. I do not think they will detain me, but it is best to be prepared. And now, by way of preliminary, I will show you how I can go over there. Remember, I have been here before, and have become acquainted with some of the secrets of this place. If you should be in danger, or if I should not come back, you will be able to fly by the way which I will now show you.'

The priest arose and entered the tower, followed by the lady.

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The pavement was of stone : part of it was open, and some ruinous steps led into a cellar. Here they descended, and found themselves in a place which had been excavated from the rock which formed three sides of the place. On the fourth was a wall, in which was a wide gap that looked out upon the chasm. It seemed as though there had once been a bridge at this point leading over to the castle.

'Here,' said the priest, 'if you look out, you cannot imagine any possibility of descent, but if you examine carefully you will perceive a narrow ledge among the shrubbery. Go out on this, and follow it along, and you will find it growing wider as it goes down. It will take you all the way to the bottom of this chasm, and there you will find stepping-stones by which to cross the brook, and on the opposite side a trail like this, which will lead you to the top of the opposite ridge.'

'I don't think that I should feel inclined to try it,' said the lady; 'but I am glad, all the same, that I have a mode of retreat. It makes one feel less desperate.'

'Oh, you know, I hope to be back again.'

'But what shall I do if you do not return?' said the lady.

'That is what troubles me,' said the priest. 'To think of you making your escape alone—'

'That is not what I meant,' said the lady. 'I referred to my own self-reproach. If you do not come back, I shall feel as though your blood is required at my hands.'

The priest looked at her and gave his short laugh.

'I shouldn't advise you to come after me to the castle,' said he. 'Your chief difficulty will be the commissariat. If I do not come back before twenty-four hours, you will then have to fly for yourself. In that case, do not go back to the road you were on before. Do not go to the castle. Take this path and go down to the bottom of the chasm, and up the other side to the top of the ridge. Keep under trees as much as possible. Travel due south. Heaven help you! God bless you! Good-bye!'

He looked at the lady. Her eyes, which were fixed on him, seemed overflowing with feeling; but whether of anxiety for him or fear for herself did not appear.

'You seem to me to be going to death,' said she, in a low voice, 'and I am the cause!'

'To death!' said the priest, with his usual laugh. '*Moriturus salutat*. Pardon!—that's Latin. At any rate, we may as well shake hands over it.'

He held out his hand. She caught it in both of hers.

'God protect you!' she murmured, in a low voice, with quivering lips. 'I shall be in despair till you come back. I shall never have the courage to fly. If you do not come back, I shall die in this tower.'

'Child,' said the priest, in a sad, sweet voice, 'you are too despondent. I will come back—do not fear. Try and get rid of these gloomy thoughts. And now, once more, good-bye.'

He pressed her hand and departed through the gap. He then began his descent, while the lady stood watching him with anxious eyes and despairing face till he had passed out of sight.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE PRIEST BEARDS A LION IN HIS DEN.

THE priest walked down the path into the chasm. It ran along a ledge, which at first was narrow, and quite concealed from view by dense masses of shrubbery, which grew all down the sloping sides of the abyss, covering the rock with a green mantle, and giving it an inviting aspect of richness and verdure. In such a place no one could have suspected the existence or even the possibility of any pathway; and this one must have been made with no little labour and skill, in the ancient days, when fighting bands had need to pass and repass.

After a few paces the path became more clearly defined. It was very steep, yet easy enough in the descent, and went down in a zigzag direction until it reached the bottom of the chasm. Here there was a brook whose babbling had been heard from above. In winter this was a fierce torrent, but now it was reduced to a slender and shallow stream. In its bed lay great boulders of granite, which afforded stepping-stones to those who might wish to pass, and could be used at any time except when the water was swollen by mountain floods.

After traversing these the priest came to the other side, and began to ascend a path of the same kind as that by which he had descended. Here he climbed about half-way up, and then paused. At this point there were two paths, one of which seemed to go up to the castle, while the other went along the side of the chasm. The latter he chose, and along this he went, ascending very gradually, until at last he reached the top of the ridge on which the castle was situated.

He now turned and directed his steps straight toward the castle, which he soon reached. At the gate stood some armed tatterdemalions, whom the priest recognised as having formed part of the gang that had stopped the train the day before. Of these he took no heed, but walked up boldly and asked to see their captain. One of the guards went with him, and after traversing the courtyard they came to the keep. Here the Carlist chief was seen lolling on a stone bench outside, and smoking a villainous cigar. As the priest approached, he started

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to his feet with no little surprise on his face, together with a dark and menacing frown, which did not by any means augur well for the bold adventurer.

'Who are you?' he asked fiercely.

The priest in return eyed the Carlist from head to foot, and then said, in a sharp, authoritative tone:

'Your name and rank?'

At this singular rejoinder to his question the Carlist chief looked somewhat amazed.

'My name?' said he, with a sneer. 'Never mind what it is. What are you? Who are you? What the devil do you mean by coming here?'

'Give your name and rank,' persisted the priest, in the same tone as before, 'and beware how you trifle with one who may be your master. Who gave you authority to occupy this post?'

'Master?—authority?' cried the Carlist chief, with an oath, which was followed by a laugh. 'Who is my master? I never saw him. Here, you fellows!' he cried, to some of his gang who stood near, 'take this fellow off—take him inside. Let me see—take him to the lower dungeons, and let him see who is master here!'

At this a score of stout ruffians came forward to obey the order. But the priest remained as cool as before. He simply drew forth a paper, and looking round upon the ruffians, he said, in a quiet voice:

'Keep back, you fellows, and take care what you do! I'm the Curé of Santa Cruz.'

At that formidable name the whole band stopped short, mute and awe-struck; for it was no common name which he had thus announced. It was a name which already had been trumpeted over the world, and in Spain had gained a baleful renown—a name which belonged to one who was known as the right arm of Don Carlos, one who was known as the beau ideal of the Spanish character, surpassing all others in splendid audacity and merciless cruelty, lavish generosity and bitterest hate, magnificent daring and narrowest fanaticism. At once chivalrous and cruel, pious and pitiless, brave and bigoted, meek and merciless, the Curé of Santa Cruz had embodied in himself all that was brightest and darkest in the Spanish character, and his name had become a word to conjure by—a word of power like that of Garibaldi in Italy, Schamyl in Circassia, or Stonewall Jackson in America. And thus, when these ruffians heard that name, it worked upon them like a spell, and they stood still, awe-struck and mute. Even the Carlist chief was compelled to own its power, although, perhaps, he would not have felt by any means inclined to submit to that potent spell, had he not seen its effect upon his followers.

'I don't believe it,' he growled.

'You do believe it,' said the priest fiercely: 'you know it. Besides, I hold here the mandate of the King;' and he brandished the paper, shouting at the same time, 'Viva el Rey!' at which all the men caught up the same cry, and shouted in unison.

The priest smiled a good-natured, amiable, forgiving smile.

'After all,' said he, in a milder voice, 'it is well for you to be cautious. I approve of this rough reception; it is soldier-like. It shows that you are true to the King. But read this. Give me something to eat and drink, and then I will tell you my errand.'

With these words he handed the paper to the Carlist chief, who took it somewhat sulkily, and read as follows:

'Headquarters, Vera, August 23rd, 1873.'

'To all officers of the army, and to all good and loyal subjects, greeting: Receive and respect our friend and lieutenant the Curé of Santa Cruz, who bears this, and is engaged in a special mission in our service.'

'CARLOS.'

On reading this, the Carlist chief drew a long breath, looked around upon his followers, elevated his eyebrows, and finally turned to the priest.

'What do you want?' he asked, in no very courteous manner.

'Nothing,' said the priest. 'Not one single thing from you but—breakfast. Don't be alarmed. I haven't come in here to interfere with you at all. My business is elsewhere. Do you understand me?'

The priest gave him a glance which was meant to convey more than the words expressed. At this the whole manner of the Carlist chief underwent a change. He at once dropped all his sourness and gloom.

'Do you mean it?' he asked eagerly.

The priest nodded.

'Certainly.'

'Then,' cried the Carlist, 'you're right welcome, and I hope you'll not mind what's happened. We have to be cautious, you know, and suspicious.'

'My dear friend, I assure you I shouldn't have troubled you at all, only I'm starving.'

'Then I swear you shall have the best breakfast in all Spain. Come in; come in. Come, in the name of heaven, and I'll give you a breakfast that will last you for a week.'

With these words, the Carlist chief led the way inside, and the priest followed.

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was constructed, in the most massive manner, out of vast blocks of rough-hewn stone. The apartment was about fifty feet in length, twenty-five in width, and twelve in height. On either side there were openings into chambers or passage-ways. The roof was vaulted, and at the farther end of the apartment there was a stairway constructed of the same cyclopean stones as the rest of the edifice. All the stone-work here visible had the same ponderous character, and seemed formed to last for many centuries to come.

Around the sides of this lower hall were suspended arms and accoutrements. There were also rude massive benches, upon which were flung rugs and blankets. Here and there were little groups, not only of men, but also of women and children. On the left side there was an enormous chimney, which was large enough for a separate chamber. In this a fire was burning, and a woman was attending to the cooking of a savoury stew. An aromatic smell of coffee was diffusing itself through the atmosphere; and this was surrounded and intermingled with the stronger and ranker, though less pungent, odours of the stew aforesaid.

The priest flung himself carelessly into a seat near a massive oaken table, and the Carlist chief took a seat beside him. The priest questioned the chief very closely as to his doings, and the disposition of his people through the country, while the chief surveyed the priest furtively and cautiously.

At last he said abruptly :

'You were on the train yesterday.'

'I was,' replied the priest coolly.

'Why did you not tell me who you were?'

'What a question to ask!' said the priest. 'Don't you understand? When I am out I don't want anyone to know or suspect. I did not choose to tell even you. Why should I? I didn't know you.'

'But you lost your purse,' said the chief, in rather a humble voice.

'And was there much in it?' asked the priest.

The chief laughed.

Breakfast now followed, and of this the priest partook heartily. Then he started up.

'I must make haste,' said he, 'and continue my journey; but as I am going into out-of-the-way places, I shall have to ask you for some supplies.'

This request was very cheerfully granted, loaves and cold meats being furnished from the Carlist larder. These the priest put into a wallet, and thus equipped, he was ready for the march.

'Adios,' said he, 'noble captain, till we meet again.'

'Adios,' said the chief.

The priest then shook hands with his entertainer and turned

away. Leaving the castle, he walked down the slope for some distance, until at length he reached the skirts of the forest. Turning round here, he stood looking back cautiously, till he felt convinced that he had not been followed, and was not observed. He now plunged into the forest, and worked his way along until he came to the chasm and found the path before mentioned. Down this he went on his way back to the tower.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE FIRST PRIEST VANISHES, AND ANOTHER PRIEST APPEARS UPON THE SCENE.

As the priest emerged from the brushwood at the top of the path, he suddenly found himself face to face with the lady. She had come through the opening, and was standing outside waiting there, breathless, her hands clasped, and her eyes set in a fixed and eager gaze of vigilant outlook and of terrified apprehension. As she recognised the priest, her whole expression changed; her face flushed, her eyes grew moist with tears of joy, her lips quivered.

'Oh, thank God! thank God!' she cried. 'Oh, how glad I am!'

The priest stood and looked at her in silence, although there was certainly every occasion for saying something. Finally he held out his hand, and she took it in hers, which were cold as ice, and tremulous.

'Poor child!' said the priest, 'you have been too excited. But were you not afraid that it might be some one else?'

'Yes,' said she; 'so afraid that I lost all strength and could not get back. I thought I heard something like that little short laugh of yours that you give, but then it seemed imagination. So I waited, and if it had been an enemy he would have caught me. But I was right, after all,' she ended joyously. 'It was your laugh—and you.'

Again the priest stood in silence looking at her.

'It's worth going over there,' said he at last, 'to make a fellow-creature happy by coming back.'

'Oh no,' she said, 'not for that. Nothing can compensate for the frightful, the terrible anxiety—nothing. But I will say no more. I am ready now for any fatigue or peril. My worst fear is over.'

'Oh, it's all very well to be glad to see me,' said the priest, with that short laugh to which the lady had referred, 'but that's nothing to the gladness you'll feel when you see what I've brought back with me. You just wait and see—that's all!'

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With these words he ascended into the tower through the gap, and assisted the lady after him. They then went up the broken stairway, and out into the open air to the fallen tree where they had taken their breakfast. Upon this he seated himself, and the lady did the same. He now opened the wallet, and distributed to her some of his stock of provisions, pointing out to her with an air of triumph the fact that they had enough to last them for a week. The lady said but little and ate but little; the priest, for his part, ate less; so the breakfast was soon despatched; after which the priest loaded his pipe and smoked the smoke of peace. The priest, as he smoked, occasionally threw a furtive glance at the lady, who now sat absorbed in her own meditations.

'I propose to ask you a few questions,' said the priest, 'merely for the sake of conversation, and you needn't answer unless you like. In the first place, you haven't been long in Spain, I take it?'

'No,' said the lady; 'only a few days.'

'And you are on your way back to England?'

'Yes.'

'Have you been travelling alone?'

'At first I had a maid, but she got frightened and left me at Bayonne. Since then I have had to travel alone.'

'You mustn't think me too inquisitive,' said the priest. 'I merely wished to know in a general way, and am by no means trying to pry into your affairs.'

He spoke in a careless tone. He was lolling in an easy attitude, and appeared to be enjoying his smoke very much. After saying these words, he began to fuss with his pipe, which did not draw well, humming to himself at the same time some absurd verses:

'My love he was a draper's clerk,
He came to see me after dark:
Around the Park we used to stray
To hear the lily-white bandmen play.

CHORUS OF DRAPER'S CLERKS.

Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound,
My love lies buried underground!

A faint smile came over the lady's face as she heard these nonsensical words from one in the garb of a priest. Still, she reflected that while it was his voice that was singing, his mind was no doubt intent on something else.

'By-the-bye,' resumed the priest, 'as I'm asking questions, I should like to ask one more. May I?'

'Most certainly,' said the lady. 'What is it?'

'Well, your name, you know. It's awkward to be as we are. Now, if I were shot and wanted you to help me, I shouldn't know what to call you.'

The lady smiled.

'My name is Talbot,' said she.

'Ah—Mrs. Talbot,' said the priest; 'thanks.'

'Not "Mrs.,"' said the lady, again smiling; 'Miss Talbot. My full name is Sydney Talbot.'

'Sydney Talbot,' repeated the priest. 'Thanks. That's all. Everything else is told. I may add, however, in an incidental way, that my name is Brooke.'

'Father Brooke?' said the lady interrogatively, with a furtive smile which was perhaps occasioned by the incongruity between the priest's sacred garb and somewhat eccentric manner.

To this question the reply was not particularly appropriate. The priest, or Brooke, as he may now be called, looked with a smile of quiet drollery at Miss Talbot, and then, in a strange whining voice, began to drone out some verses of a song:

'Old Bluebeard was a warrior bold,
He kept his wives in a great stronghold.
One—Two—Three—Four—Five—Six—Seven—
They all of them died and went to Heaven.
Old B. fell into a dismal state,
And went and married Number Eight.'

'Well,' he resumed in his natural voice, 'Father Brooke isn't bad; Brother Brooke, however, would be better; but, on the whole, simple "Brooke" is the best of all.'

'Well, now, Mr. Brooke,' asked the lady anxiously, 'what are our prospects? Have you found out anything?'

'Oh yes; I've had a conversation with an amiable Carlist who was on the point of blowing my brains out, and was only prevented by the unparalleled "cheek" of the unworthy being who now addresses you.'

'Did you really incur such danger?' asked Miss Talbot in feigned anxiety.

'Danger? Oh, a trifle; but a miss is as good as a mile. I'm here now, safe and sound, but for two or three seconds you ran a great risk of making your journey alone. However, I made friends with them, and was entertained royally. Now, as to escape. I'm sorry to say that the country is swarming everywhere with these noble Carlists; that there is no such thing as law; that there are no magistrates, no police, no post-office, no telegraph, no railway trains, no newspapers, and no taxes except of an irregular kind.'

'That is very bad,' said Miss Talbot slowly, and in a low, anxious voice.

'Oh yes,' said Brooke, 'but it's just as I feared.'

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' "Who said, 'It is just as I feared—
Two owls and a wren
And a cock and a hen
Have all built their nests in my beard.' "

'That's me. I told you so. Still, there's no need to despair. It's quite plain that we cannot travel by day without being discovered, so we shall have to try it by night. This will be all the better. So you must spend this day in meditation and prayer, and also in laying up a stock of bodily and mental strength. To-night we set forth, and we must move on all night long. May I ask if there is any place in particular to which you prefer going ?

'None whatever. I must leave myself altogether to you.'

'So I suppose,' said Brooke.

'But is there no danger in this place, Mr. Brooke ?

'Danger ? None whatever. I can't explain to you how completely this is out of the way of everyone, whether marauder or honest man. You may be perfectly at your ease on that score. Will this place satisfy you ?

'Perfectly. But I should like very much to tell you, Mr. Brooke, how grateful I feel for all this trouble and——'

'Ah, now, Miss Talbot !' cried Brooke, averting his face, and holding up both hands, 'don't—don't ! Let's drop all that sort of thing. It's part of the mockery of civilization. Words generally count for nothing. Acts are all in all. What I ask of you is for you to gather up your strength so as to be able to foot it with me and not break down. But first of all, I must say I very much wish you had some costume a little less marked than that of an English lady. Now, if you could pass as a peasant-girl, or an old woman, or a goatherd's wife, or a vender of quack medicines, or anything humble and yet national, why——'

Miss Talbot shook her head with a mournful smile, and looked troubled.

'I've had an idea all day,' said Brooke, 'which I suppose there's no great harm in mentioning.'

'What ?

'What do you say to disguising yourself as a priest ?

'A priest ? How can I ?

'Well, with a dress like this of mine. It's very convenient—long, ample, hides everything—just the thing, in fact. You can slip it on over your present dress, and—there you are, transformed into a priest. I hope you're not proud.'

'I'm sure I should be only too glad to disguise myself, but where can I get the dress ?

'Take this one.'

'The one that you have ?

'Yes.'

'But what will you do ?

'Do without.'

'But that will expose you to danger.'

'No it won't. It won't make the slightest difference. I'm only wearing this for the sake of variety. The fact is, you see, I found I was growing too volatile, and so I assumed a priest's dress, in the hope that it would give me greater sobriety and weight of character. I've been keeping it up for three days, and feel a little tired of it. So you may have it—a free gift—breviary and all, especially the breviary. Come—there's a fair offer.'

'I really cannot make out,' said Miss Talbot, with a laugh, 'whether you are in jest or earnest.'

'Oh, then take me in earnest,' said Brooke, 'and accept the offer. You see, it's your only chance of escape. You know old Billy Magee.

"Old Billy Magee wore a flaxen wig,
And a beard did his face surround,
For the baillie came racing after he
With a bill for fifty pound."

So what do you say to gracefully giving way to necessity ?

'If you really think that you will be running no risk——'

'No more than I've always been running until three days ago.'

'Well, I shall be very glad indeed, and only too much obliged.'

'That's an uncommonly sensible decision,' said Brooke. 'You see,' said he, as he unbuttoned the priest's robe, 'I've merely been wearing this over my usual dress, and you can do the same.' As he spoke he drew off the robe. 'You can slip it on,' he continued, 'as easy as wink, and you'll find it quite large enough every way.'

And now Brooke stood divested of the priest's dress, revealing himself clothed in a suit of brown tweed—hunting-coat, knickerbockers, stockings, laced boots, etc. He then took from his coat pocket a travelling-cap with a visor, which he put upon his head.

'You can have the priest's hat too,' he added, 'and— But no, by Jove ! I won't—no, I won't let you have the spectacles. You might wear them in case of need, though, for they're only plain glass. But hang it ! I can't—I can't and you shan't. Only fancy putting spectacles on the angel Gabriel !'

Meanwhile Miss Talbot had taken the priest's robe and had thrown it over her own dress. The clerical frock was of cloth, long enough to reach to her feet, and buttoned all the way from her chin down. Around the neck was a cape, which descended half-way to the knees. As she passed her arms through the sleeves she remarked that it would fit her admirably ; and then, taking the hat, she retired inside the tower, so as to adjust the outlines of her new costume in a more satisfactory manner than

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'One thing will be against me,' said she. 'What shall I do about it ?'

'What is that ?'

'Why, my hair.'

'Your hair !' repeated Brooke. 'H'm—well, that is a puzzle !'

'It will interfere with anything like a real disguise, of course.'

'Well, I suppose it would. In which case we can only hope not to come near enough to the enemy to be closely inspected.'

'Had I not better cut it off ?' said Miss Talbot.

'What !' exclaimed Brooke, with amazement in his face.

Miss Talbot repeated her question.

'Cut off your hair—that hair !' said Brooke. 'What a horrible idea !'

'Will you cut it ?'

'Never !' said Brooke fervently.

'Shall I ?'

Brooke drew a long breath and looked earnestly at her.

'Oh, don't ask me,' said he at length, in a dejected tone. 'I'm floored ! It's like throwing overboard a cargo of gold, and silver, and precious stones to lighten the ship. Yea, more, it's like the Russian woman who threw over her child to the wolves to make possible the escape of the rest of the family. But there are some who would prefer to be eaten by wolves rather than sacrifice the child.'

'Well,' said Miss Talbot, 'your comparison of the child is a little too much ; but if it comes to throwing the treasure overboard to save the ship, I shall not hesitate a moment.'

Brooke made no reply, and Miss Talbot went into the tower.

Brooke then resumed his seat, and, looking thoughtfully into vacancy, sang in a low voice all to himself :

'Oh, a princess there was in the north countree,
And her hair reached down below her knee ;
And lovers they gathered by thousands there,
For love of the maid with the golden hair.'

CHAPTER XII.

HOW BROOKE AND TALBOT TAKE TO FLIGHT.

BROOKE was roused from his meditations by a light footstep close beside him. He looked up and saw Miss Talbot standing before him in her new costume. As he looked he rose to his feet and gazed at her fixedly without a word.

The change was wonderful. It was no longer a young lady that he saw—it was a young priest. The broad hat came down

low upon the head, and beneath it there was a face full of sweet dignity and gentle grace, a face serene, and noble, and pure. Such a face Raffaele loved to reproduce while portraying the Angel of the Visitation, where youth, and radiant beauty, and unsullied purity, and divinest grace all appear combined in one celestial visage.

Brooke looked for some time with the same intent gaze, and in utter silence.

'How do you think I look?' asked Miss Talbot.

'Look?' repeated Brooke. He hesitated as if at a loss, and then went on in a way that was peculiarly his own. 'Look? Oh, first-rate—very well—very well indeed. In fact, I had no idea that you could transform yourself so completely. I believe I was on the point of saying something about a vision of angels, but I'll be commonplace. All I can say is, that if I were to meet such a priest in real life, I'd down on my knees at once, make a confession, and— No, I wouldn't; I'd try to become a priest myself, so as to be always somewhere near him. And if he were a monk, I'd join the same monastery; and if he were a missionary, I'd go with him to the uttermost ends of the earth; if the cannibals ate him up, I'd make them eat me too; and, in any event, I should feel that in such company I should be nearer heaven than anywhere else. For, you see, you've always lived in a serene atmosphere, where you have known nothing of the evil of the world, and so your face has on it the stamp of heaven itself, which it first received, and which has never been effaced. So, you see, you're just the one to go about as a priest. Oh, it's a great advantage to be as you are, and to have that angelic face! Like the old man in the song:

"Oh, he never got drunk and he never swore,
And he never did violate the law;
And so we buried him underground,
And the funeral-bell did merrily sound
Ding! Dong! Dell!"

Thus far Brooke had rattled on in a strange, dry fashion; but suddenly he stopped, and then exclaimed:

'Good Heavens!'

'What's the matter?' asked Miss Talbot, who had seemed much amused at all this nonsense.

'Why, what have you done with your hair?'

Miss Talbot raised her hat from her head, and looked at him. Again he looked at her in silence. Yes, it was all gone! That glorious hair, which awhile ago had been folded in great masses round her head, was there no longer. She had cut it off! It was short now, like the hair of a young man, and hung loose in wavy curls over her forehead. Yet so far from her appearance being marred or disfigured by such a mutilation, the result was

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actually more becoming to her as she stood there in her new costume. Few could have made such a sacrifice without serious injury to their appearance ; but in this case there was merely a change from one character to another, and all the beauty and all the subtle fascination still remained.

'I couldn't have believed it,' said Brooke, at length.

'What ?'

'Oh, well—several things. In the first place I couldn't have believed that any living girl could have made the sacrifice. In the second place, I couldn't have believed that the one who had passed through such an ordeal could come forth more glorious than ever. But the sacrifice was too much. However, it's done. "Nay, never shake your gory locks at me. Thou canst not say I did it." But where is it all ?'

'It ? What ?'

'As if you don't know ? Why, the treasure that you threw overboard—the child that you flung to the wolves, O Russian mother !'

'Oh, you mean the hair ! Why, I left it in there.'

She pointed carelessly to the tower. At this Brooke went over and entered it. He saw a mass of hair lying there on the stone floor, where she had carelessly thrown it after cutting it off. This he gathered up very carefully and even tenderly, picking up even small scattered locks of it. Then he rolled it all up into the smallest possible space, after which he bound it tight in his handkerchief and put it in his pocket. He was, as usual, singing to himself snatches of old songs which expressed nothing in particular :

"The maiden she says to him, says she,

'Another man's wife I've got to be ;

So go thy ways across the sea,

For all is over with you and me.' "

Which words had certainly no particular application to present circumstances.

When he came out again, Miss Talbot was seated on the tree in a meditative mood.

'I was just picking up the hair,' said Brooke, in an indifferent tone. 'If we were tracked here and pursued it might tell tales, and it would tell too much.'

'Oh, how thoughtless of me !' said she. 'But really I did intend to go back and throw it down into the torrent. You see, I was so anxious to know if my disguise was right, that I hurried out at once to show you.'

'Oh, it's all the same. I've disposed of it better than you would have done.'

'I shall try not to be so thoughtless again.'

Brooke said nothing, but seated himself near her on the log.

'I'm sorry you don't smoke,' said he, after a pause; 'but I hope you don't object to my taking a small whiff now and then.'

'Oh no,' said Miss Talbot. 'I like to see you smoking.'

'Do you know,' said Brooke, after he had again filled and lighted his inevitable pipe—'do you know, I think your character is almost perfect.'

'Why, because I don't object to smoking?' asked Miss Talbot, with a smile.

'Well, I take that as one of the many straws which show how the wind blows. But do you really mean to tell me that you don't regret what you have done?'

'What, with my hair? What a question! Regret it? Not at all. It will grow again—in time. To use your own figure, when the sailor is struggling for life against the storm, he doesn't regret the treasure that he has flung overboard so as to lighten the ship. And do you think that I am so weak as to hesitate for a moment when your safety as well as my own is concerned? For, you see, I have to remember that while I am with you, you too are in danger. So no hesitation is possible. How could I have the heart to ask you to help me, if I persisted in keeping up any kind of dress that might endanger both of us?'

Brooke made no reply, but sat puffing out great clouds of smoke. After some lapse of time he opened his mouth to speak.

'I wish you had heavier boots,' said he.

'Yes,' said Miss Talbot, 'my boots are my weak point. But, you see, I never anticipated a walk of twenty or thirty miles. However, my dress is long, and perhaps my feet will not be noticed.'

'Oh, it isn't the fear of their being noticed, but the danger that they may give way altogether in our rough walk, and leave you barefoot among the rocks.'

'Well, if I find them giving way, I shall wrap rags around them before they go to pieces altogether.'

After a further silence Brooke spoke again.

'There's one thing more,' said he, 'that may be mentioned. We may make good our escape to-night, as I hope, but then—we may not. To provide against occurrences of all sorts, it's as well to adopt certain fixed characters and act them out. You are a priest—remember that; never forget it. You have that breviary, which you will do well to look at from time to time. There's mighty good reading in that breviary, though I'm sorry to say I never could find it; but no doubt you'll do more justice to it than I did, especially if you understand Latin, which I'm afraid you don't. But, you see, it won't do for me to call you "Miss Talbot." We might be captured by fellows who understand English, and they would at once take the hint. And so suppose I drop the "Miss," and call you simply "Talbot"?'

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'That's a very good suggestion,' said Miss Talbot. 'The name will be my own, and familiar, and better than any strange name or title which you might invent. Oh yes, by all means drop the "Miss."'

'You will understand, of course,' said Brooke anxiously, 'that in this proposal there is no disrespect, no attempt at undue familiarity, no—'

'Surely, surely,' said Miss Talbot earnestly, 'it's hardly necessary to say all that. If you adopt that tone, I shall have to begin and tell you how deeply grateful I am, how much I owe you, how I long to do something to—'

'Oh, well! Come, now, if you go on in that way, I am shut up at once.'

He relapsed into silence. After a few minutes he spoke again.

'Talbot,' said he, in a strange tone, much softer than his usual voice.

'Well?' said Miss Talbot gently.

'As I have dropped the "Miss," have you any objections to drop the "Mister," and address me by the simple and unconventional name of "Brooke"?' You see, it's very important for us, in our circumstances, to cultivate this seeming familiarity. If you were really a young priest, and I were really your friend and travelling companion, we should address one another in this simple fashion.'

'I have no objection whatever,' said Miss Talbot, 'and I do not see why you should take such pains to explain. It is enough for you to ask. Whatever you say I will do.'

'Say "Brooke," then.'

'Brooke,' said Miss Talbot, with a little shyness.

'And now, Talbot, I intend to use your surname only in speaking to you, and I hope that you will do the same with me. This is merely for practice.'

'Certainly, Brooke.'

The name came a little awkwardly at first, but after a little further conversation this difficulty passed away, and the two addressed one another quite naturally in this simple fashion. And now, as Brooke has chosen this name for Miss Talbot, I also will drop the 'Miss,' and call her henceforth simply 'Talbot.'

Brooke made Talbot lie down all the rest of the day, so as to sleep, if possible, and, at any rate, to lay up a good stock of strength for the formidable work of the approaching night. With her usual considerateness and docility, Talbot obeyed; and although she did not sleep, she certainly obtained an amount of rest of which she stood in great need.

At length the evening came, and the two ate their repast, after which Brooke secreted the remainder of the provisions in the tower, by way of precaution. It was not necessary, he said,

to carry that load, and if they were forced to return it would be there for their use.

They started a little after sunset. An hour's walk brought them to the road, at the spot where they had first met, after which they turned toward the place where Brooke had left the train on the previous day. Their pace was a moderate one, for the whole night was before them, and Brooke was anxious to save Talbot's strength as much as possible.

For about an hour more they walked along, until they came to where the country was more open. The moon was shining brightly, and thus far there had been no signs of life. But at this point there came up sounds from the road before them which were not a little alarming. Brooke laid himself upon the ground, and listened for some time.

'People are approaching,' said he. 'There is quite a large crowd. They must be Carlists. It will be dangerous for us to go on any farther. It will be better to hide here until they pass.'

'Very well,' said Talbot. 'I quite agree with you. I should hate to go back again.'

There was on their right, not far from the road, an old wind-mill, which stood upon a gently rising ground, and was quite a conspicuous object. This caught the eye of Brooke as he looked all around.

'There,' said he, 'is the place for us. These fellows seem to be on the march. They will soon pass by this and be gone. Let us hide in the old mill.'

Talbot at once assented. They then left the road and crossed the fields. In a short time they reached the mill. It was deserted, and the machinery was out of order, but otherwise it was in good preservation. The door was open, and they entered. Having once obtained this concealment, they stood in the door-way anxiously watching. At length they saw a crowd of men come up along the road, and these they regarded with quick-beating hearts.

'Brooke,' said Talbot, in a whisper.

'What?'

'What shall we do if they come here?'

'That's a solemn question,' said Brooke. 'We ought to have something to fall back on. Wait.'

He went away for a few minutes, and then returned. As he came back to the door, Talbot pressed his arm and pointed. Brooke looked out.

To his horror, the whole band had stopped, and some of them were facing toward the mill as though about to approach it.

'What a mistake we've made!' said Brooke.

'They're coming here!' said Talbot, in a thrilling whisper. 'What can we do? Can we fly?'

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'No,' said Brooke; 'they'll see us. We have only one hope. There's a ladder here, and we can climb up into the loft. Come.'

Taking Talbot's hand, Brooke led her to the ladder, and they climbed up into the loft, where they sat listening.

Talbot's anticipation was too true. The band approached the mill, and soon the two fugitives heard them all around.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW BROOKE AND TALBOT MAKE SEVERAL NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

FOR some time the two fugitives remained motionless and listened. There seemed to be a large number of men below, of whom a few were inside the mill, but the greater part remained outside. These kept up an incessant jabber; but it was of a discordant character, some talking about getting ready a supper, some about making a fire some about forage, while at times a word would be dropped which seemed to indicate that they were in pursuit of fugitives. Nothing more definite than this could be learned.

Brooke, however, had been gradually creeping to one side of the mill, where there was a window, while Talbot followed as noiselessly as possible, until they both were able from their concealment to look out upon the scene below, which was in no way calculated to reassure them. They saw a crowd of men, about a hundred in number, who looked very much to Brooke like the train-stoppers of the day before. Their arms were piled, and they themselves were dispersed about, engaged in various occupations; some eating, some drinking, some smoking, while from them all a confused hubbub arose. Half-a-dozen ill-looking fellows came towards the door of the mill.

'A fire!' said one. 'Let's burn down the old mill. There's wood enough in it.'

'Ay,' said another, 'wood enough for a hundred fires.'

A shout of applause greeted this proposal, but the hearers above felt their hearts quail with horror. Talbot laid her hand on Brooke's arm. Brooke, to reassure her, took her hand in his and pressed it gently, and felt it cold and tremulous. He drew her nearer to him, and whispered softly in her ear:

'Don't be alarmed. At the worst, we can give ourselves up. Trust to me.'

Talbot drew a long breath, and made a desperate effort to master her fears; but the scene below grew more and more terrible. The wild shout of approbation which followed the proposal to burn the mill was caught up by one after another, till at last the whole band was filled with that one idea. A dozen

men rushed inside, and began to hammer, and tear, and pull at the flooring and other parts of the woodwork, while others busied themselves with preparing splints with which to kindle the fire.

'Brooke,' whispered Talbot in a tremulous voice—'oh, Brooke, let us go down.'

'Wait—not yet,' said Brooke, on whose brow cold drops of perspiration were already standing. 'Wait. Let us see what they will do.'

Talbot drew back with a shudder.

'The mill is of stone,' said Brooke. 'They can't burn it.'

'But all the inside is of wood,' said Talbot—'the floors, the doors, the machinery, the beams.'

Brooke was silent, and watched the preparations outside. These grew more and more menacing. A great pile of wood was soon collected, which grew rapidly to more formidable proportions. If these prisoners hoped for life, they must leave their present hiding-place, and soon, too; for soon—ah, too soon, if that pile were once kindled—the flames would pour in, and burn all the inner woodwork, even if the walls were of stone. At this moment a man came hurrying forward, and burst in among the crowd.

'What's the meaning of all this nonsense?' he asked in a stern voice.

'Why, we're burning the mill,' said one of the most active of the party.

'Fools!' cried the other, 'are you mad? It will attract attention. We shall be seen—perhaps attacked.'

'Pooh!' said the man impudently, 'what of that? That's all the better.'

The other laid his hand upon his sword, and looked as though he was about to use it, but a wild outcry burst forth from all the crowd, and with an impatient gesture he turned away. By his dress, which was the only uniform visible, and also by his bearing, he seemed to be the captain of the band, yet his authority did not seem to receive any very strong recognition. Still, the sight of this uniform was of itself encouraging to Brooke, who now at once decided upon the course which he should adopt. There was no longer time to hesitate. Already the match was struck, the next moment the flame would be touched to the kindling, and the fires would blaze up. So Brooke called in a loud voice:

'Stop! stop till we come down!'

At this cry they all looked up in amazement. The match dropped from the hand of the man who held it, and several of the men sprang to their arms.

'Who goes there?' cried the one who seemed to be the captain.

'Friends,' said Brooke; 'we'll come down.' Then turning to Talbot, he whispered, 'Now, Talbot, is the time to show the stuff you're made of. Courage, my boy, courage! Remember,

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Talbot, you're not a girl now—not a weak girl, but you're a boy—and an English boy! Remember that, my lad, for now your life and mine too depend upon you!

'Don't fear for me,' said Talbot firmly.

'Good!' said Brooke. 'Now follow me, and be as cool as a clock, even if you feel the muzzle of a pistol against your forehead!'

With these cheerful words Brooke descended and Talbot followed. The ladder had not been removed, for the simple reason that it consisted of slats nailed against two of the principal beams, too solid even for Samson himself to shake. On reaching the lower storey they hurried out at once, and the gang stood collected together awaiting them—a grim and grisly throng. Among them, the man whom Brooke had taken for their captain was now their spokesman.

'Who are you?' he asked rudely, after a hasty glance at each.

Brooke could not now adopt the tone which had been so effective in the morning, for his gown was off, and he could no longer be the Curé of Santa Cruz. He kept his coolness, however, and answered in an off-hand manner:

'Oh, it's all right; we're friends. I'll show you our papers.'

'All right?' said the other with a laugh. 'That's good, too!'

At this all the crowd around laughed jeeringly.

'I belong to the good cause,' said Brooke. 'I'm a loyal subject of his Majesty. *Viva el Rey!*'

He expected some response to 'his loyal sentiment, but the actual result was simply appalling. The captain looked at him, and then at Talbot, with a cruel stare.

'Ah!' said he. 'I thought so. Boys,' he continued, turning to his men, 'we're in luck. We'll get something out of these devils. They're part of the band. They can put us on the track!'

This remark was greeted with a shout of applause. 'Allow me to inform you, señor,' said the captain to the unfortunate Brooke, 'that you have made a slight mistake. You are not our friends but our enemies. We are not Carlists, but Republicans. I am Captain Lopez, of the Fourteenth Regiment, and have been detailed with these brave fellows on a special mission. You are able to give us useful information; but if you refuse to give it you shall both be shot.'

In spite of the terrible mistake which he had made, Brooke kept his coolness and his presence of mind admirably.

'I'm very glad to hear it,' said he to Lopez. 'The fact is, I thought you were Carlists, and so I said that I was one too—as anyone would do. But I'm not a Carlist; I'm a Republican.'

Lopez, at this, gave utterance to a derisive laugh.

'Oh yes,' he said, 'of course, you are anything we please. And if we should turn out, after all, to be Carlists, you would swear

that you are a Carlist again. Doesn't it strike you, señor, that you are trifling with us ?

'I assure you, Captain Lopez,' said Brooke, 'that I'm not a Carlist, for I'm not a Spaniard.'

'You may not be a Spaniard, yet still be a devoted Carlist.'

'Yes, but I'm not. I assure you that I'm a Republican. Shall I prove it to you and to all these gentleman ?

'Try it,' sneered Lopez.

'I'm an American,' said Brooke.

'An American,' repeated Lopez bitterly. 'Better for you to be a Carlist than that. Is it not enough for you Americans to intermeddle with our affairs in Cuba, and help our rebels there, but must you also come to help our rebels here ? But come—what is your business here ? Let's see what new pretence you have to offer.'

'I am a traveller.'

'Yes, I suppose so,' sneered Lopez. 'And who is this other ?

'He is a young priest.'

'A young priest ? Ah ! Then, señor, let me inform you that as Spaniards we hate all Americans, and as Republicans we hate all priests. Spain has had too much of both. Americans are her worst enemies outside and priests inside. Down with all Americans and priests !

The echo to this sentiment came in a shout from all the followers of Lopez, 'Down with all Americans and priests !'

With this cry a hundred fierce faces surrounded them, and glared at them with fiery eyes. It seemed as though their last hour had come. The crowd pressed closer, and clamoured for their immediate destruction. The only thing that held them back was the attitude of Brooke, who stood perfectly cool and tranquil, with his eyes fixed on Lopez, a good-natured smile on his face, and his hands carelessly in his pockets. Close beside him stood Talbot, pale, it is true, but with a calm exterior that showed not one trace of fear. Brooke did not see her, and did not venture to look at her, but he felt that she was as firm as a rock. Had they faltered in the slightest degree, the storm must have burst ; but as it was, the calmness of these two disarmed the fury of the mob, and their fierce passion died away.

'Captain Lopez,' said Brooke, in a quiet and friendly tone, 'you may have reason to hate my country, but I assure you that you have absolutely no cause for complaint against me and my friend. We are simple travellers who have been interrupted on our journey, and are now trying to get to the nearest railway station so as to resume it as soon as possible.'

'How did you get here ?' asked Lopez, after a pause in which he again scrutinized severely the two prisoners.

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mind as to his answer. It was his intention to identify himself with Talbot, and speak as though he had all along been travelling with 'the young priest.'

'Our train stopped,' said he, 'and we took the diligence over this road yesterday. We were stopped again, captured and robbed by Carlists, and we have escaped from them, and are now trying to get back.'

'Was your train stopped by Carlists?'

'No; the diligence.'

'Where did the Carlists go?'

'I have no idea.'

'Where did you come from last?'

'Barcelona.'

'Where are you going now?'

'To England,' said Brooke; 'and finally,' he added, 'allow me to show you this, which I am sure will establish my character in your eyes.'

With these words he drew forth a paper and handed it to Lopez. The latter took it, and one of the men lighted a bit of wood which served as a torch, after which Lopez read the following:

'Headquarters, Vittori', May 10th, 1873.

'This is to certify that the bearer of this is an American citizen named Raleigh Brooke, and is correspondent of a New York journal. He has permission to traverse our lines in pursuit of his business.'

'CONCHA.'

Lopez read it over a second time.

'A newspaper correspondent!' said he. 'H'm! That means a spy.' He handed it back again to Brooke, who replaced it in his pocket. 'I'll think it over,' responded Lopez. 'I'll examine you both to-morrow and inspect your papers. I'm too tired now. You may both go inside again where you were hiding before. We won't burn you up.'

At these last words the whole gang burst into a jeering laugh that foreboded something so horrible that the stout heart of Brooke quailed within him, as, followed by Talbot, he once more entered the old mill.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THE ANXIOUS RUSSELL SEEKS TO CONCEAL A TREASURE.

THE Russell party, on reaching the castle, were all conducted inside, where they found themselves in an arched hall which has already been described. Traversing this, they ascended the

spondency, and misery. Harry felt an involuntary pity for the man ; and as his own flow of spirits was unfailing, he set himself to work to try and cheer him.

'Well,' said he, 'this is rather a dismal place, Russell ; but, after all, it's better than being put in a vault underground.'

'It's pup-precious kik-kik-cold,' said Russell, his teeth chattering, partly from cold and partly from terror. 'This'll bring on an attack of rheumatiz—that's what it's going to do. Oh, I know it !'

'Well, it *is* a little chilly, that's a fact,' said Harry, shrugging his shoulders. 'It's a pity we couldn't use that fireplace. But what a tremendous fireplace it is ! Why, it's as big as a barn. What do you say to our amusing ourselves by starting a fire ? It would be great fun.'

'But we've gig-gig-got no fuel,' said Russell, with a shiver.

'Fuel ? Why, let's cut up that big bench.'

'What with ?'

'Why, with my pocket-knife, of course. We could whittle enough chips off it to make a good big fire, and still have enough left for a bench. In fact, we could get enough fuel off that for a dozen fires. Why, man, there must be at least a cord of wood in that bench. Whittling's rather slow work, it's true, but in a place like this it'll be an occupation, and that's something. Prisoners go mad unless they have something to do ; and so, just to save myself from madness, I mean to go in for fuel—unless you can think of something else that's better.'

Rattling out this in his usual lively fashion, Harry went to the bench and began a solemn examination of it, with a view toward whittling it up into firewood. Russell did not move, but regarded Harry with the same silent misery in his face. At last he spoke.

'What did-did-do you think they're a-going to did-did-do ?'

'Who ?' asked Harry.

'Why, these people—that kik-kik-captured us.'

'These Carlists ? Well, I don't know ; seems to me they want to make some money out of us.'

'Why did they let all the Spaniards go and kik-kik-capture us ?'

'Oh, well, they think as we're English we'll probably have more money about us than their own countrymen, and be safer plunder also.'

'Did-did-do you think they'll go so far as to pip-pup-plunder us ?' asked Russell, in a voice of horror.

'Haven't a doubt of it.'

'Oh Lord !' groaned the other.

'What's the matter ?'

Russell gave a fresh groan.

'This kik-kik-cursed kik-kik-country !' he at length ejaculated.

'Oh, well,' said Harry, 'it isn't the country, it's the people.'

'Do you think they're really Kik-kik-Carlists?'

'Well, yes. I don't see any reason why they shouldn't be.'

'I was thinking that they might be bub-bub-bandits.'

'Well, there isn't any very great difference between the two, so far as we are concerned.'

'But isn't there any law among the Kik-kik-Carlists? Can't we appeal to Did-did-Don Carlos?'

'Oh yes, of course—if we could only get at him, and if he could only get at us; but these two things are just what can't be done. And so I'm afraid we'll have to make up our minds to pay the piper.'

At this Russell again gave a heavy groan.

'Don't be alarmed,' said Harry, in a soothing tone. 'We can beat them down.'

'No,' moaned Russell, 'we can't do anything. And I've got too much about me altogether.'

'You haven't carried any large sum of money with you, surely?' cried Harry. 'Why, man, you're mad!'

'But I didn't think there'd be any danger on the railway,' said Russell.

'If your money is in bills of exchange you'll be right enough,' said Harry.

Russell shook his head.

'No,' said he, 'it's worse than that.'

'How?'

'My money is in bub-bub-bonds—Spanish bub-bub-bonds.'

'Bonds!' repeated Harry.

'Yes,' groaned Russell—'kik-kik-coupon bub-bub-bonds.'

'Coupon bonds! Why, man, what in Heaven's name are you doing with coupon bonds in this country?'

'Why, they're Spanish bonds, and I was taking them out of the country to England.'

'Whew!' whistled Harry. 'In how much?'

'Thirty thousand pounds!' wailed Russell, in a voice of despair. Another prolonged whistle was the result of this information.

'It's no use making it a secret to you,' continued Russell. 'I'll be searched, I suppose, and the bonds'll be taken.'

'I'll tell you what to do,' said Harry: 'let me take care of them.' Russell shook his head.

'N-no; you'll be searched too. They'll be no safer.'

'Well, then, hide them in this room somewhere.'

'I don't know where to hide them,' said Russell dolefully; 'besides, we may be taken to another room, and so it's no use hiding them here. I've been thinking of sewing them up inside the lining of my coat, only I haven't any needle and thread to sew with. Oh, if Mrs. Russell were here! I didn't think of

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this. I'd get her to stitch them inside my coat to-night. And now I don't know what to do. If it weren't for these bonds I should feel safe enough. But the amount is so enormous!

'Are they registered?

'Oh no. I don't believe they register bonds in this miserable country, or do anything but steal them,' groaned Russell. 'I suppose they'll overhaul us all to-morrow.'

'Very likely.'

'Can you think of any way by which I can hide these bonds?

Harry shook his head. At the same moment there occurred to him what Ashby had told him about certain Spanish bonds. If Ashby was right, then this must be the very money which belonged to Katie, and which, according to Ashby, Russell was trying to get hold of for himself. From this point of view it suddenly assumed an immense interest in his eyes, and drove away the thought of every other thing. Even the fire was now forgotten, and the bench was not desecrated by the knife.

'See here; I'll tell you what to do,' said Harry, thoughtfully and earnestly. 'The very worst thing that you can do is to carry all that money about with you, on your own person, mind that. You'll be searched, of course. To stitch them in your clothes is absurd. These people will examine every square inch of all your clothes, including your shirt-collar, your pocket-handkerchief, your silk hat, and your boots. They'd find the smallest fragment of a bit of paper, even if you had it hidden inside your boot-laces. Now, I'll tell you what you'll have to do. You'll have to get rid of that money of yours.'

'Bub-bub-bub-but how?' stammered Russell, in fresh consternation.

'How? Why, hide it.'

'Where?

'Somewhere about here—and soon too—before you go to sleep.'

'But suppose I am tit-tit-taken away, and don't come back again?

'Well, in that case your only hope is to confide in me, and then if you are taken away I shall perhaps be left. It's not likely that both of us will be taken away from here. We shall perhaps be separated, and one will be left behind. In that case the one who is left can watch over the treasure. Besides, in case we should escape, we shall know where it is, and we may be able to get the government to send a body of men here to help us recover it.'

'Oh yes—the government!' said Russell bitterly. 'I know the government here—only too well. The government will send a body of men here to help us recover it, and then—why, then of course they'll keep it all for themselves, every farthing. Yes, sir, that's the Spanish style—every farthing. No; don't talk to me about the government. I'm bound to hold on to this, and not trust to any of your beggarly Spanish governments.'

'But if you hold on to it you'll be sure to lose it,' said Harry, in great impatience.

'I don't believe they'll examine me at all,' said Russell, suddenly changing his tone.

'They will,' persisted Harry, 'as sure as you're alive, and that too before this time to-morrow. In that case you'll lose every penny of the thirty thousand pounds.'

('And of course,' thought Harry, 'it'll be poor little Katie's loss; and all through the infernal obstinacy of this pig-headed tailor!')

'Oh, well. I'll think it over,' said Russell, cautiously avoiding any further discussion.

'You won't have much time for that,' urged Harry.

'Oh yes, I will—plenty of time. I'll have all night, for I won't sleep a wink, and I shall have nothing else to do but to think over this.'

This was droned out in a tone of utter despair.

Harry spent some more time in trying to change Russell's mind, but in vain; and at length he gave up, thinking that he would have a better chance in the morning. Besides, he was beginning to feel sleepy, and his arguments were growing somewhat incoherent; so he flung himself on the rude couch just as he was, 'all standing,' and in a few minutes was sound asleep.

Russell sat motionless for some time, until at length the heavy breathing of his companion showed that he was asleep. Upon this he rose, and went on tiptoe softly over to Harry's bed, and tried in various ways to see whether the sleep was false or real. Having assured himself that it was real, he took up the torch and began to survey the apartment more closely. Already, while talking with Harry, his eyes had narrowly scanned every corner of the room, and no place had appeared which could afford the slightest chance of concealment. From the very first he had thought of the stone pavement of the floor; but now, on examination, this proved to be far too ponderous to be moved by any force that he could command. Thus, after having traversed the whole room, he reached the fireplace.

This, as has been said, was of gigantic dimensions, being intended to hold enough wood to heat this vast apartment. Here among the mountains, inside this stone castle, the cold was sometimes severe, and the builders of the castle had in this way made provision for the comfort of its occupants. To this chimney Russell now turned his attention, in the hope that something might present itself here which could be used as a place of concealment. So he walked stealthily and noiselessly toward it, and on reaching it stood surveying its huge dimensions in great astonishment. Such chimneys may still be seen in many an old castle or palace in the north of Europe, though less frequent in

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the castles of Spain. This one was deep and wide and high, and our friend Russell could easily enter it without stooping.

He entered thus the great fireplace and looked around, holding his torch so as to light up the interior. Below, there was the pavement of stone, which seemed solid and immovable. Above, the chimney arose far on high, and through the wide opening the sky overhead was plainly visible, with its glittering stars.

Now, as Russell stood peering about, he noticed something in the construction of the chimney which struck him as rather peculiar, and this was several stones on the left side, which projected from the wall and were placed one above another. The arrangement was so singular that it at once arrested his attention, and being in search of a hiding-place for his treasure, he could not avoid examining it further with keener interest. This arrangement of the stones one above another was suggestive of climbing. They seemed intended for steps, and he therefore peered upward more curiously, to see how far these steps continued and what was the end. Looking thus upward, he noticed on one side what seemed like a niche in the chimney wall. It was so formed that it was not visible unless one were standing deep inside the chimney and looking up for it, and it seemed to be deep and spacious. No sooner had he caught sight of this niche than he determined to investigate it farther. For a few moments he paused to see whether Harry was still asleep or not, and then, being satisfied on this point, he began to climb up. So nicely were the stones adjusted that this was easy even to an inactive and heavy man like him, and after ascending three steps he stood and peered into the niche. It seemed quite deep. He could not see any end to it or any terminating wall. What the design of it was he could not imagine. He saw, however, that it afforded an admirable place of concealment for his treasure, and he determined at once to avail himself of it. Here he thought it would be secure from discovery, and it might remain here undetected and unharmed for any length of time. As for fire, it was not likely that the chimney was ever used; but even if it were, there was scarcely any possibility that the flames could affect anything in this deep niche.

Russell now took from his pocket a bulky parcel, and leaning far inside the niche, he laid it carefully down. Then he held up the torch, and allowed its light to fall into the niche, so as to see that all was secure; after which, feeling fully satisfied with his work, and experiencing a great sense of relief, he descended from his perch. Shortly after he extinguished the torch, and then, stretching himself out on the bed beside Harry, he resigned himself to oblivion.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH RUSSELL UNDERGOES AN EXAMINATION.

EARLY on the following morning, Russell was roused from sleep by a messenger, who made a peremptory demand for him to rise and follow. Harry explained that he was wanted by the Carlist chief for examination, and reproached him for not having concealed the bonds the previous night ; at which reproachful words Russell showed no signs of dejection, as Harry had expected, but on the contrary, to his amazement, seemed to have upon his face a slight air of triumph, regarding him with a self-satisfied smile and a cunning leer which puzzled him greatly. This strange and unexpected change in Russell, from terror and despair to peace of mind and jocularly, was a puzzle over which Harry racked his brains for some time, but to no purpose.

Meanwhile Russell was led away. He didn't take up any time with his toilet, for the unfortunate man saw nothing with which he could even wash his face. However, he made no complaint, and for a very good reason, since he could not speak a word of Spanish ; and, moreover, he still felt so joyful over his concealment of the treasure, that he was able to bear with considerable equanimity all the lesser ills of life.

In a few minutes he found himself ushered into the presence of the Carlist chief. The latter was seated upon a chest, over which some rugs were spread. Another chest was also there, upon which he signed to Russell to be seated.

'Ye doesn't spake Spanish ?' said the chief.

At these words Russell started and stared in surprise. The words were English, with an accent that was not altogether unfamiliar. It seemed a good omen.

'Do you speak English ?' he exclaimed.

'A throifle,' said the chief. 'I had a frind that learned me a few sintincis av it ; so I doesn't moind spakin it, as it'll be more convaynient for both av us. Ye must know, thin, that, in the first place, I lamint the necessichood that compils me to arrest the loikes av you, but I've got arders from me military shuparior, an' I've got to obey thin, so I have. It's no use protistin, for I'm only an agint. So I'd loike yez to be honest wid me, an' I'll be the same wid you.'

'Why, you speak English first-rate—in fact, splendid !' said the delighted Russell. 'I never heard a foreigner speak it so well before.'

'Sure an' it's aisy enough,' said the chief ; 'as aisy as dhrinkin', whin ye have practice. I've got a farrn accint, av coorse, but that's nather here nor there.'

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Russell thought that his accent had a little smack of Irish about it, and wondered whether all Spaniards spoke English like that.

'Ye'll excuse me,' said the chief, 'if I have to ax you a few throiflin interrogations for farrum's sake. I'll now begin. What is your name ?'

'Russell.'

'Russell--ah ! What profession ?'

'A gentleman,' said Russell, somewhat pompously.

'A gentleman, eh ; an' ye live on yer own money ?'

'Of course.'

'That's right,' said the chief, with deep satisfaction. 'It's meself that's the proud man this day to meet wid the loikes av you that's got an indepindint fartune, an' can call his sowl his own. An' have yez been long in Spain, thir ?'

'No, only a couple of months.'

'Thravellin' for plisure, av coorse,' insinuated the chief.

'Yes ; I wanted to take a run through the Continent,' said Russell, in a grandiose way, as though the 'Continent' was something belonging to him ; 'and I'm also bringing home with me a ward of mine--Miss Westlotorn.'

'Ah ! an' so the young lady is a ward av yours ? I thought she was your daughter.'

'No, she's my ward.'

'Is she rich ?'

'Well, sir, she's comfortable ; she's worth about fifty thousand pounds sterling. Now I don't call that rich ; I only call it comfortable.'

'An' what do yez call rich ?' asked the chief, in a tender voice, full of affectionate interest.

'Well, a couple of hundred thousand pounds or so. You see, when I was worth fifty thousand I thought I was somebody, but I soon learned how paltry an amount that is. No, sir ; two hundred thousand pounds are necessary to make a rich man, and not a penny less, sir--not a penny, sir.'

'Thim's me own sintimints intirely,' said the chief ; 'that shuits me, so it does. I saw by the cut av yez that ye must be a millionaire at laste--so I did.'

'A millionaire !' said Russell, with affected modesty. 'Well, you know, in England that's a big word ; but I suppose here in Spain, or anywhere on the Continent, I might be called one.'

'I suppose,' said the chief, after a pause, 'that ye've got an ixtensive acquaintince wid the nobility an' gintry an' all thim fellers ?'

'Yes,' said Russell, 'I have ; and not in England only, but throughout the Continent. Not that I think much of the Continental nobility. Between you and me, I think they're a beggarly lot.'

'Thru for you,' said the chief. 'Thim's me own sintimiunts.'

'Why, sir,' continued Russell, who evidently thought he was making a deep impression, and so went on all the more in his vain-glorious boastings, 'some of these here Continental nobility ain't worth a brass farthing. Why, sir, there's lots of respectable English merchants—tailors, for instance—and other quiet, unassuming gentlemen, who could buy out these Continental nobles, out and out, over and over again.'

'Divil a doubt av that same,' said the chief. 'Ye know how to ixpriss yourself wid very shuitable sintimiunts. I'd like to know more of you. I suppose ye've got a passport?'

'A passport?' said Russell. 'Well, yes, I believe I did get one,' and fumbling in his pocket, he succeeded in bringing to light that important document. This the chief took, and, without opening it, put it in his own pocket.

'I'll take a luk at it prisintly,' said he. 'Perhaps ye can tell me about your frind, the young man that's wid yez. Is he yer son?'

'Son? Oh no; but he's a doosed fine young feller. His name's Rivers.'

'Is he rich?'

'Well, he's pretty comfortable, I think. He's in the wine and fruit business, and has an agency at Barcelona.'

'Sure an' it's meself that's glad to hear that same,' said the chief. 'An' can ye tell me anything about that other young man that was shtrivin' to join yer party?'

'That fellow—his name's Ashby.'

'Ashby, is it?'

'Yes, and the greatest scoundrel that ever lived—a miserable fortune-hunter, trying to inveigle my ward into a marriage. I came here barely in time to save her. And the only object the infernal scoundrel has now in sneaking after me is to try and get hold of her and get her from me. But he'll find he's got pretty tough work before him. He's got me to deal with this time.'

'Is the young gyerrul fond av him?' asked the chief, in a tone of deep anxiety.

'She? Fond of him? Pooh! Nonsense! She's like all girls—likes to have attentions paid her, that's all; and so this poor fool thought she would marry him. Why, the man's an ass! But I guess he's had enough of chasing her by this time. By Jove! there's some satisfaction, after all, in being caught this way, since he's caught too.'

Some further conversation followed of the same kind. Russell continued to indulge in a strain of self-glorification, and the chief to ask him questions. By yielding to his silly vanity, Russell was preparing the way for results which he little expected. Little did he dream of what was soon to disclose itself. He

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thought that he was impressing the mind of the Carlist chief with ideas of the greatness, grandeur, power, wealth, and glory of the celebrated Russell whom he had made his prisoner, and hoped in this way to overhaul his captor, so as to secure good treatment, or even to terrify him into letting him go. He little knew that the chief regarded him merely as a bird to be plucked. In his eyes, the more the feathers the greater the yield. The moment the chief found that his prisoner professed to be a millionaire, that moment the fate of Russell and his party was sealed. The effect upon the chief was already manifest in part, for every moment he grew more courteous in his manner.

'Sure it's meself,' said he at length, 'that's bothered about the accommodations ye have. It's a cowl'd, damp room that, an' no furniture at all, at all.'

'Yes,' said Russell, 'it *is* rather rough; and for a man that's accustomed to high living and luxurious surroundings it's very bad. I'm dreadful afraid of rheumatiz.'

'Don't spake another word about it,' said the chief briskly. 'I'll find ye another room where ye'll be as comfortable as the Quane av England. Ye'll have as good a bed as the best.'

This sudden offer startled Russell and excited dreadful apprehensions. What would become of his bonds? He hastened now to modify his last words.

'Oh, well,' said he, 'for that matter, you needn't trouble yourself. I dare say I shall do very well where I am.'

'Do very well, is it? What! an' you wid the rheumatiz! Sure to glory and ye'll not do anything av the kind. I'll get yez another room where ye'll be warrum.'

'Oh, but,' said Russell, in deep uneasiness, 'I like that room, I do, really. I like the view and the—the—the ventilation. It's splendid—in fact, it's the finest room to sleep in I ever saw. If you could only let me have a bed to myself—'

'A bed to yerself? Sure an' that's jist what I'm going to give ye—a bed to yerself altogether an' a room too; an' so ye'll have comfort, an' warrumth, an' solichood all comboined.'

'But, really,' persisted Russell, 'my dear sir, all that is quite unnecessary.'

'Nae a bit av it. Ye'll have the best; an' the room'll be yours at onct, so it will; an' ye'll not go back to bed again in that frozen hole.'

'But I assure—I assure you,' persisted Russell most earnestly, 'it's a noble room—a comfortable room—a splendid room.'

'Oh, sure ye're too modest, so ye are,' said the chief. 'But nivir ye moind—lave it all to me. I'll fix it for ye.'

Russell was in deep dejection and anxiety, yet he felt afraid to press the matter too eagerly. To be taken away from the vicinity of his treasure was indeed a crushing blow, yet he dared not

object too strongly, lest the chief might suspect something. So he could only submit with the best grace possible under the circumstances, and find faint consolation in the thought that the treasure was at least secure. After a brief silence the chief resumed :

'It's pained I am, so I am, to trouble a gintleman av fartune, but I'm undher the onplisint nayeissichood av subjictin' ye to a further examination. It's a mite onplisint at first, but it's nothin' whin yer used to it.'

'Another examination !' repeated Russell, with no little uneasiness. 'What is that ?'

'Oh, it's only an examination av yer apparel, yer clothes, bit by bit.'

'My clothes ?'

'Yes—to gyard against anythin' bein' concealed about ye.'

'But I have nothing concealed, on my honour !'

At this the chief waved his hands deprecatingly.

'Hush !' said he. 'Whisht, will ye ! don't I know it ? begorra meself does. It's all a mere farrum. It's a laygal inactmint that I've got to follow. Discipline must be kept up. Sure an' if I didn't obey the law meself first an' foremost, me own mind 'ud all revolt against me, an' thin where'd I be ? But it'll not be anythin'. Sure to glory, many's the fine man I've shtripped, an' him none the worse for it. So go ahead, fool, an' the sooner ye begin, the sooner it'll be over.'

'I—I—don't see—I—I—don't know——' stammered Russell.

'Arrah, sure to glory, it's as aisy as wink. Begin where ye are.'

'What, here ?' cried Russell aghast.

'Yis.'

'Undress here ?'

'Av coorse.'

'But—but—mayn't I have a private room ?'

'But ye mayn't, for ye moight consale somethin'. Ye've got to ondress before the examin'in' committee—that's me. Sometimes it's done in the presence av a committee av the whole—that's the whole regiment av us ; but this time, out av jue respect for you an' considherations av decarrum, I've farrumed a committee av one.'

'But what other clothes may I put on ?' asked Russell ruefully.

'Sure an' I've got a fine shuit for ye.'

'I don't see any.'

'Oh, they're handy enough to here : they're in the next room, quite convaynient, an' I'll let ye have thim afther ye get these off.'

Russell stood still in deep gloom and despondency. All his finest feelings were outraged beyond description at this proposal. The chief, however, sat calm and smiling, as though quite unconscious of any evil intent.

'Come,' said he, 'hurry up !'

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There was no help for it. He was clearly in this man's power. It was a dreadful thought, yet he had to obey. So he took off his cravat. This he did slowly and solemnly, as though preparing to bare his neck for the axe of the executioner.

'Come, make haste,' said the chief. 'I've only got a few minutes to spare; an' if ye can't change yer clothes before me alone, why, I'll have to go off, an' thin ye'll have half-a-dozen av thim up here at ye.'

'And must I?' moaned the unhappy man.

'Av coorse,' said the chief. 'An' what is it all? Sure it's nothin' at all at all, so it isn't.'

Russell gave a heavy sigh, and then taking off his coat he laid it on the floor. Then he cast an appealing glance at the chief, who, however, only responded with an impatient gesture. Thereupon Russell took off his waistcoat. Another appealing glance was then thrown at the chief, who only responded by a gesture more impatient than before.

'Come,' said he, 'be quick! Ye see, ye may have no end av val'able dockymints stitched in between the lining av yer clothes—I've often knowed that same. Begorra, we get more in that way that we find stitched in the clothes, than we do from the wallets an' the opin contriutions.'

'But I haven't anything stitched between my clothes.'

So ye say, an' so I'm bound to believe,' said the chief. 'Sure I wouldn't for the worruld be afther hintin' that ye iver spake anythin' but the truth. Howandiver, I'll tell ye somethin'. Ye see, I was standin' at the dure av yer room last night by the marest accidint, an' I happened to overhear a confabulation between you an' Rivers. An' ye know what ye towld him, and ye know what he said to you. Ye said somethin' about havin' Spanish bonds—to the chune av thirty thousand pounds—in yer pocket, or about ye somewhere, an' ye wanted some place to hide it, an' Rivers advised ye to have it stitched in yer clothes. Now, I scorrun' avesdthroppin', so I does, but whin infarrumation av that kind comes free to yer ears, ye're bound to get the good av it. An' so I'm goin' to instichoot an investigation over yer clothes, an' over yer room, an' over yer thrunks, an' over everythin' ye've got, an' I'm not goin' to rist till I've got thim bonds. Oh, ye needn't say anythin'—I can see it all in yer face. There's nothin' to say. I don't expect ye to own up an' hand over the money. I'm contint to hunt it up meself—that is, for the prisint. Ye see, it's mine, for it belongs to his R'yal Majesty Carlos, King av Spain. The bonds are issued by Spain, an' as he is King av Spain, he owns thim bonds. If ye was a native Spaniard, ye'd give thim up out av pure loyalty, but as ye're a farr'ner, why, av coorse ye can't be ixpected to deny yerself to such an ixtint.'

At this astounding disclosure Russell was struck dumb. So,

then, his secret was betrayed, and in the most dangerous quarter, and, worst of all, by his own folly ! Once or twice he was about to speak, but the chief checked him, and he himself was only too well aware of the utter futility of any denial or of any attempt to explain away what the chief had overheard. Only one consolation now remained, and that was the hope that the chief might not find it. The place in which he had hidden the bonds seemed to him to be very much out of the way of an ordinary search, and not at all likely to be explored by anyone.

At length Russell had finished his task, and had divested himself of everything, his remorseless captor insisting on his leaving nothing ; and so he stood shivering and crouching on the stone floor.

‘Now,’ said the chief, ‘walk in there. I’ll follow.’

He pointed to a passage-way on the left, which led to an apartment beyond. At his gesture Russell slunk away in that direction, while the chief, gathering all the clothes up in a bundle, followed. On reaching the apartment, Russell saw some garments lying spread out on a bench. They were quite new, and consisted of a military uniform profusely decorated with gold-lace. Everything was there complete.

‘There,’ said the chief, ‘thim clothes belonged to a frind av mine whose acquaintince I made a month ago. He left these here an’ wint away in another shuit, just as ye’ll lave yer clothes an’ go away, as I thrust, in these. Put thim on now, as soon as ye loike. Ye’ll find thim a fine fit, an’ they’re an excellint matayrial. The frind that left thim was a giniral officer, and be the same tokin that same man swore more, an’ faster, an’ louder, an’ deeper than any man I iver met with afore or since.’

While the affable chief was thus talking, Russell proceeded to array himself in the general’s uniform. Everything was there complete, from top to toe, and everything was of the very best quality—richest gold lace, glittering epaulettes, stripes and bands that dazzled the eye, buttons and chains of splendour indescribable, hat with gorgeous plumage, sword of magnificent decoration, attached to a belt that a king might choose to wear. All these delighted the soul of Russell, but not least of all the cloth, whose softness and exquisite fineness appealed to his professional feelings, and caused his fingers to wander lovingly over the costly fabric.

Soon he had completed the task of dressing himself, and once more stood erect in all the dignity of manhood.

‘Begorra !’ said the chief, ‘ye’d ought to be grateful to me for makin’ ye put on thim clothes. Ye look loike a commandher-in-chafe, so ye do—loike the Juke av Wellington himself. The clothes fit ye loike a glove. I niver saw a betther fit—niver. Ye must put on yer sword an’ belt, so as to give a finish to it all,’

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and with these words he handed Russell the weapon of war. Russell took it with evident pleasure and fastened it about his waist. The chief made him walk up and down, and complimented him so strongly that the prisoner in his new delight almost forgot the woes of captivity.

The chief now prepared to retire. Pointing to Russell's clothes, which he had kept all the time rolled up in a bundle tucked under one arm, he shook his head meditatively, and said :

'It'll be a long job I'll be havin' wid these.'

'Why so?' asked Russell.

'Sure it's the examin'in' that I've got to do,' said the chief. 'Gin'rally we examine thim by stickin' pins through every part, but in yer case there's thirty thousand pounds stowed away somewhere, an' I'm goin' meself to rip every stitch apart. Afther I've done wid my search thro' thim clothes, it isn't loikely that any one in this castle 'll ever be loikely to put thim together again. To do that same 'ud nade a proffessional tailor wid a crayative janius, so it would. An' so, I say, ye'll have to look on thim gin'ral's clothes as yer own ; an' whin ye get free, as I hope ye'll be soon, ye may wear thim away home wid ye, an' take my blessin' wid ye. Moreover, ye'll have to keep this room. I'll spind this day in examin'in' yer clothes, an' to-morrow I'll examine the other room. The bonds 'll kape till then, as I know ye haven't towld Rivers anythin' about what ye done wid thim.'

With these words the chief retired, and locked the door after him.

CHAPTER XVI.

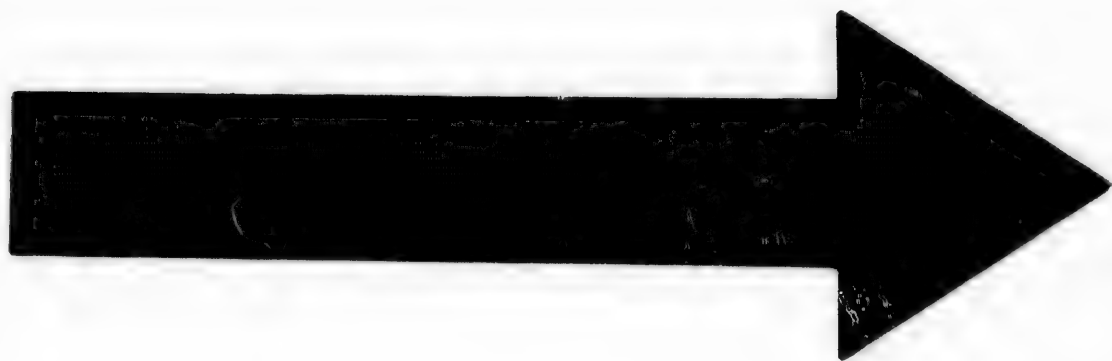
HOW RUSSELL HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH A MERRY MONARCH.

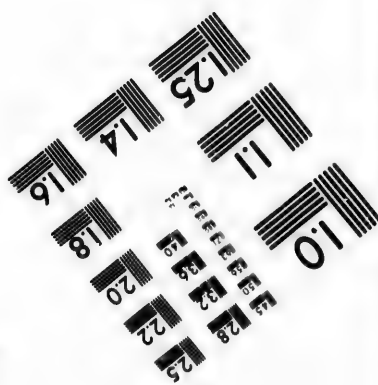
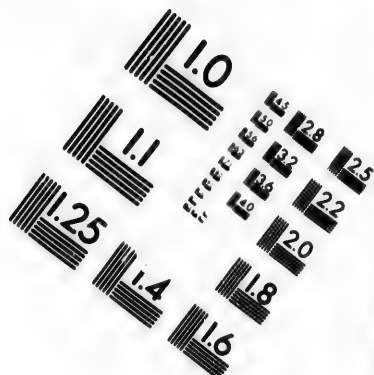
THAT same evening Russell was astonished at receiving a fairly written note, which when opened contained the following in English :

'The King will be graciously pleased to receive Lord Russell this evening at seven o'clock.'

It was written on simple note-paper, and bore no date. The messenger who brought it handed it in, and departed without saying a word.

On reading this note, Russell was completely bewildered. Who, he thought, is the King? Who is Lord Russell? A prolonged meditation over this could throw no particular light upon it, and at length he was forced to conclude that he himself was taken for Lord John Russell, that famous English statesman whose name is known over the civilized world. It was a mistake, yet, as he





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complacently thought, not, after all, an unnatural one. By long familiarity with the British aristocracy (in the capacity of tailor) he had perhaps unconsciously acquired their lofty sentiments and caught up their aristocratic tone and bearing. In person he felt that he had rather the advantage of Lord John. His name had, of course, something to do with the mistake. All these things had combined to give his captors the impression that he was a British peer.

But who was 'the King?' The Queen of Spain would be the ex-Queen; the last King of Spain was now the ex-King Amadeus; but 'the King'—who was he? At length it flashed upon Russell that 'the King' could mean no other than the celebrated personage who claimed for himself that title, and who was known to the world as Don Carlos. This, then, was the illustrious personage with whom he was shortly to have an interview.

It must be confessed that, in spite of his long association with the British aristocracy, the bosom of the valiant Russell heaved with strange emotions, and his heart quaked with unusual throcs, at the prospect of this interview. As his host claimed to be 'King,' he would naturally expect to be treated as such. But how would that be? Of the etiquette of courts Russell had no knowledge whatever. From French novels which he had read he had a vague idea that people said 'Sire' when addressing majesty, and got on their knees to kiss royal hands when first introduced. But farther than this our good Russell's knowledge did not lead him, nor was his imagination able to convey him. He could only conjecture in the vaguest possible way, and wait as patiently as possible for the hour of the momentous interview.

The appointed time arrived. He was waited on by six men: all were armed. Russell felt an involuntary trepidation at this sight, which reminded him of events, in his reading, where armed men came in this way to lead some wretched prisoner off to execution. However, he succeeded in plucking up his courage sufficiently to follow them. His own attire, certainly, did not a little toward inspiring him with fortitude, and the brilliant uniform of a general officer with golden epaulettes, gold stripes, gold buttons, gold lace, gold hatband, gold collar, gorgeous hat, resplendent feathers, and rattling, clanking sword, all served to stimulate him and rouse him to the heroic mood.

He was led by the men to the grand hall in which he had been before. Here, around the sides, were gathered a large number of men, all armed, and, though ill-dressed, still presenting a very impressive appearance. In the middle of the hall was a table on which a dinner was spread. All around a hundred torches flared and flamed, and from them vast clouds of pitchy smoke rolled aloft into the vaulted ceiling. At one end there was a raised seat, and on that raised seat there was a figure clothed in a

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military garb and infolded in a military cloak. Toward this figure Russell was led.

Now, Russell was so overawed by the wild scene, by the armed men, and, above all, by the thought of the royal presence and the royal eye, that he dared not look up, but kept his eyes humbly on the floor, and in this way advanced. On reaching the aforesaid figure our Russell fell upon his knees, and seizing the hand of the said figure, proceeded to kiss it with much vigour, when suddenly a familiar voice sounded in his ears, and looking up, he felt like Lalla Rookh at the discovery of Feramorz, for he found that this royal personage was none other than the Carlist chief.

'Rise, me lord,' said the well-known voice. 'We are glad to recayve ye in our r'y'l prisince. We cud give ye betther intertainmint in our r'y'l palace av the Escorial, only thim thayves av rebels won't let us. But we can maintain our state here in these sayquesthered mountains, an', begorra, we have a throne in the hearts av a bowld pisintry.'

By this time Russell had risen to his feet, and stood there bowing over and over again.

'His Majesty' rose.

'I'm not overfond,' said he, 'me lord, av state etiquette, though our ancistors were divils av fellers at it. What I loike is a good dinner, an' a glass av somethin' warrum, an' a pipe afther all. Ye've heard the owld song :

" Oh, a taste av salt an' a plate av praties,
And a dhrop av whisky to wash thim down,
An' a tasty dhuidheen to help digistion—
That's the fashion in Limerick town."

It had already caused some surprise to Russell that a Spanish chieftain should speak English with the Irish accent ; but now to find one who claimed to be the King of Spain lightly trolling an Irish ditty to a rollicking tune was, to say the least, just a little unusual. It occurred to him, however, that 'his Majesty' must have learned his English from an Irishman ; and further thought showed him that such a fact was perfectly natural, since, being a Catholic, he had of course employed a Catholic tutor, who was almost certain to be an Irishman. Which conclusion led to another, namely, that the Catholic princes and nobles of Europe, including the Pope himself and the College of Cardinals, if they speak English at all, speak it with more or less of an Irish brogue.

'His Majesty' now led the way to the table, inviting Russell to follow. There Russell beheld a tempting repast, whose savoury steam penetrated through his nostrils to that heart of hearts—that *cor cordium* which lieth behind all sense, filling it

with wild longings. He saw roast capons, obtained from heaven knows where; rich odoriferous *olla podrida*, and various kinds of game. There was aromatic coffee; there were steaming meat-pies, in which was perceptible the scent of truffles; while modestly, yet all-pervadingly, like the perfume of *mignonette* in a garden of a thousand flowers, or like the influence of one good man in a community of worldlings, or like the song of the poet in a hard, prosaic age, there was wafted to his senses the steam of fat up-land mushrooms.

These two had that banquet all to themselves—namely, ‘his Majesty’ and ‘Lord’ Russell.

‘Me lord,’ said ‘his Majesty,’ ‘is anything wanting? Tell us. Yer wish shall be gratified. Does ye wish for music? A piper an’ a fiddler too are both convaynient, an’, begorra, thim fellers can bate out-an’-out all the pipers and fiddlers this side av the Bay av Biscay. They’re both Irishmen, so they are, an’ they’re our sworn body-gyard, an’ there ye have it. But, man, ye’re not dhriinkin’. What’ll ye have? Here’s port from Oporto—pure—none av yer vile Saxon compounds; likewise here’s sherry from Xeres. Here’s marsala an’ maraschino. Here’s champagne an’ cognac. Here’s also whisky. What d’ye say, me lord? Is it whisky? Divil a doubt! I knowed it—begorra, I knowed it by the twinkle av yer eye. Thrust to me for findin’ that out; sure it’s meself that can tell a conjaynial spirit, so it is.’

Hereupon ‘his Majesty’ began to brew a tumbler of toddy. Russell, who was an experienced hand, gazed upon the royal proceedings with a critical eye, but found nothing wanting. The royal hand was as experienced as his own. The drink that resulted was equal, to say the least of it, to anything that had ever touched his palate. He tasted, and felt like a new man. He tasted again, and all his sorrows vanished. He tasted for a third time, and there came over him a feeling of peace, and content, and brotherly love to all mankind.

‘His Majesty’ had also been tasting, and with every taste the royal mind seemed to assume a new phase.

‘In our coort,’ said ‘his Majesty,’ ‘as at prisint constichooted, we cannot offer the injuicemints that are held forth at Vienna, Berlin, an’ St. Paytersburg; but we can furnish some lads that can bate the worrudd. I’d like to howld a coort an’ have the ladies. We’d have a ball. Oh, but it’s meself that’s fond av dancin’. Do ye dance, me lord? Sure but there’s nothin’ in life like it! An’ more’s the pity that I can’t get here the craim av our Spanish aristocracy. But we’re too far away entirely. As for dancin’—begorra, I’ve seen dancin’ in my time that ‘ud take yer head off!’

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Whin Teddy came out to the crowd,
 An' danced upon nothin' at all—
 Wid a himpin cravat round his neck
 That the hangman had fixed on his head ;
 An' so he kept kickin' an' prane:
 Long afther he ought to be dead.
 Whoor-ooo-ooo !"

As 'his Majesty' trolled out this, Russell could not help feeling that it was decidedly out of accord with his royal character, and ventured even to hint as much. Upon this tears started into the royal eye. 'His Majesty' took Russell's hand, telling him, with deep emotion, that he was a true friend, and that he would strive to profit by his friendship.

'An' oh, ye thafe of the worruld !' continued 'his Majesty,' suddenly changing the conversation, 'ye've played the mischief wid thim bonds. Where have ye hid them, ye rogue ? But niver mind. I'll be ayvin wid ye yit. How much are they ? Thirty thousand pounds ! Begorra, I'll give ye that amount for thim. I'd like to take up thim bonds for the credit av our monarchy an' our kinglom. I'll tell ye what I'll do. I'll give ye an order on our lord high treasurer for the whole amount in cash ! That's what I'll do, so I will. Ye naydn't give yerself any more trouble. I'll give ye the hard cash through the lord high treasurer—that's me way. I'll do it !'

'His Majesty' here mixed another glass of toddy. After a few draughts he assumed a more dignified attitude.

'Me lord,' said he, 'I should like to ask ye now, quite infarrumally, what there is to prayvint a raycognition by your government av our claims an' our rights. We are winnin' our way back to the throne an' crown av our ancistors. A lawless mob howlds our capital, but they'll be kicked out afore a month av Sundays. I should like to make a friindly agraymint through you, me lord, wid your government. Whin I git to be king, I agray to cling to an alliance offinsive and dayfinsive wid your government. There's one common inimy, the raypublic av America, an' it's ayqually hostile to both av us. We, as sole repraysintative av Conservatism an' the owld proimayval order, will ally ourselves wid you agin the common inimy for paice an' for war. What do ye say to that ? Begorra, it's a fine offer intoirely ! Ye'll not find another livin' potentate that'll make it. Bismarek won't. M'Mahon—Irishman though he is—won't. The Czar won't. Franz Joseph won't. So there's only us. If ye don't accept our preposals we'll go over to the inimy. We'll buy President Grant. We'll make a dayscint on Ireland. I know a man that 'ud be proud to take command av the invadin' armies. His name's O'Toole, that's now in the Carlist camp, an' a divil av a feller he is. He'd sweep Ireland from one ind av it

to the other. Give me O'Toole, says I, an' I'll bate the worruld in arrums, says I. Begorra, I would. An' now fill yer glass, me boy.'

'His Majesty' mixed another tumbler for Russell.

'Drink, me lord,' said he, 'to the fairest av the fair.'

And with these words he swallowed another tumblerful, while Russell did the same.

'By "the fairest av the fair,"' explained 'his Majesty,' as he proceeded to mix another drink, 'I mean yer daughter—the pairless Lady Katie.'

'My ward, "your Majesty,"' said Russell, correcting him.

'All the same, me lord,' said 'his Majesty,' 'it was a slip av the tongue. It was me heart that spoke. Listen to me now. I've somethin' to tell ye. It's a proposal.'

'His Majesty' paused for a moment, then took a fresh drink, then laid down the glass, then sighed heavily, and then took another drink.

'Me lord,' said he, in a solemn tone, 'ye know, no doubt, that we are a bachelor. Ye don't know it? Well, we are. I say, we are a bachelor. We've been lookin' all around for ages afther a partner—a r'y'l consort. All the iligible faymales av all the coorts av Europe have been solicitin' our alliance. But none av thim wor shuitable. No. Without love we won't marry—we won't adopt the infernal system av state marriages. Where our heart isn't concerned our r'y'al hand don't go—not a bit av it. Now, we niver saw the woman yet that we'd be willin' to raise to the throne av Spain until we saw yer ward—the lovely, the charrumin, the baywitchin' Lady Katie. Nay, me lord, start not, an' don't suspect us av onjue praysipitation. We haven't addhressed the Lady Katie yet on that point. We've acted in accordance wid r'y'l usage, an' now make a farrumal offer av our alliance to the parents an' gyarjians av the lovely being. What do ye say, me lord? Will ye give yer consint to our proposal, an' allow yer ward to become the Quane av Spain?'

At this Russell was quite overwhelmed. He had listened with open mouth to this last address of 'his Majesty,' and at length, when it all culminated in this direct and unmistakable proposal, he was so astounded that he didn't know what to say. He therefore sat silent and staring with open mouth, until at length, not knowin' anything better to do, he mechanically raised the tumbler of toddy and poured the whole of it into that open mouth.

'That's right!' exclaimed 'his Majesty' heartily, and he at once began to replenish the empty glasses; 'an' mind you, me boy, it's as much for your intherest, me lord, as it is for hers. It's a great thing for a young gyerral to become the Quane av Spain; an' as for yerself, why, av coorse there's no ind to the

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'His Majesty' paused for a reply. Russell stared fixedly before him into vacancy, but uttered not a word. Either the high honour that had been proposed, or the brilliant future that had been laid open, or else the whisky toddy, or all three combined, had overcome him utterly ; and so he sat there staring and silent.

'Sure, I know what yer thinkin' about,' said 'his Majesty.' 'There's only one objection, an' that's religion. But that's nothin', he continued, with airy and pagan indifference ; 'we can arrange all that aisy enough. Love's stronger than religion any day. Ye know the owld song.'

And 'his Majesty' trolled out one of his peculiar melodies :

'There was a Ballyshannon spinster
That fell in love wid a Prodes'an' min'ster ;
But the praste refused to publish the banns,
So they both ran away to the Mussulmans.'

After this 'his Majesty' went on in a rapturous way to expatiate upon the subject of Katie, and in this way the remainder of the evening was taken up. Russell said but little : what he said was chiefly an incoherent jumble which expressed with tears of gratitude a full acceptance of 'his Majesty's' offer. At the same time he was able to point out that in England it was the fashion to consult the lady herself, and to insist that 'his Majesty' should see Katie herself, so as to get her consent. And this 'his Majesty' swore that he would do.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW HARRY FINDS HIMSELF VERY MUCH OVER-ESTIMATED, AND
AFTERWARD LIGHTS UPON A GLOOMY MYSTERY.

ON the day after the departure of Russell, Harry was invited to an interview with the chief. A guard of six Carlists escorted him to the hall. Here there was an imposing scene. All along the walls were lines of armed men in strange wild costumes ; overhead rose the vaulted roof, crusted over with the mould of ages ; while at one end there hung a canopy formed of the gorgeous banner of Castile. Under this stood a figure in the

uniform of a general officer, and as Harry drew near he recognised in him the Carlist chief. At the same moment a shout rang through the hall, a hundred rifles fell with a crash upon the stony pavement, and then followed a loud, long cry, 'Viva el Rey!'

Harry's familiarity with Spanish had already been made known to the chief, who now addressed him in that language. What, however, was the amazement of Harry at learning the astounding fact that the chief claimed to be no less a person than Don Carlos himself, and assumed the airs and claimed the honours of royalty. In addition to this, while the chief claimed such honours, his rude followers bestowed them with readiness and even enthusiasm. That this could be anything else than a pretence—that this rude chief could really be the courtly and gallant Bourbon—seemed to Harry an utter absurdity; and in addition to this, the descriptions which he had heard of the real Don Carlos did not at all accord with the appearance of this man. Yet, if the claim was a false one, its very audacity showed him the possible peril that surrounded his party; for if their captor was so unblushing and unscrupulous a villain, what hope could they have of escape?

Speaking then in this way as though he were Don Carlos, and assuming at the same time the manner and style of a king, the Carlist chief said much about his sorrow at being forced to detain them, and also expatiated upon the difficulties of his own position. Finally, he informed Harry that a tax had been imposed on all foreigners to help pay the expenses of the war.

To this Harry listened attentively, and was not surprised to find that the chief expected a money payment. Whether he called it a tax or any other name, it amounted to the same thing, and became a ransom for their lives. If he and his party were thus held as prisoners to ransom, the act amounted, of course, to nothing else than brigandage, and this Carlist chief was nothing better than a brigand. Against being seized and held as a prisoner on such terms Harry could have offered no end of arguments, of course, together with protests, objections, and threats; but he had far too clear a head to think of such a thing. He knew well the uselessness of mere arguments in a case like this, where he had nothing stronger behind, and therefore he sought to find out just what his position was. So, first of all, he asked what might be the amount of his own ransom.

The answer to this question almost took his breath away. To his amazement and horror, the ransom named for him was no less a sum than ten thousand pounds.

'Will "your Majesty" pardon me,' said Harry with great obsequiousness, and giving to his captor the royal honours which he claimed—'will "your Majesty" pardon me if I assure "your

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Majesty" that the amount of my ransom is so enormous that it is utterly impossible for me to pay it ?

At this 'his Majesty' smiled, and proceeded to tell Harry the ransoms fixed for the others : these were—for Russell and his party thirty thousand pounds, and for Ashby one thousand. The name 'Lord Russell,' which 'his Majesty' applied to that worthy, sounded strange to Harry, but this was a trifle compared with other things, and so, without making any reference to this, he replied :

'Thirty thousand pounds ! I assure "your Majesty" that Russell has not the fourth part of that in all the world.'

'His Majesty' looked incredulous, and told Harry that 'Lord Russell' had himself put his own wealth at two hundred thousand, and that of his ward at fifty thousand. At this Harry's heart quaked within him for fear of Katie. Now he began to see more clearly the danger that there was. Russell, he thought, had been indulging some foolish gasconade about himself, and had let out the secret of Katie's fortune. He wondered why Ashby had been let off on so small a sum ; and thinking that he might not have heard correctly, he asked again about this. The reply confirmed what he had heard, and Harry could not help making a remark about the strange injustice of exacting ten thousand from him and only one thousand from Ashby. This at once was noticed by 'his Majesty,' who, however, proposed not to lessen the ransom of Harry, but to raise that of Ashby. He eagerly asked Harry about the wealth of his friend.

'Oh, I don't know,' said Harry, who saw that it would not help himself to have Ashby's ransom raised. 'All I do know is this, which I assure "your Majesty" is truth, that to me a ransom of ten thousand pounds is an impossible sum, and means simply death.'

'His Majesty' smiled, assenting at the same time to the statement that non-payment was equivalent to death.

'In that case,' said Harry, 'may I ask one favour ?'

'His Majesty' graciously assented.

'I should like,' said Harry, 'to have my valise. There's nothing in it that I care about except some cigars—'

'His Majesty' interrupted with a wave of the royal hand, and granted his request. After this Harry was informed that one week was allowed for time in which to procure a ransom, and that if it were not forthcoming at the end of that time, he and his friends would all be shot. After this Harry was dismissed to his own apartment. The dread sentence and its possible result interfered neither with the digestion nor the sleep of the light-hearted Harry. That night he went to bed and slept the sleep of the just. He had the bed and the room now all to

himself, and would have slept till morning had he not been roused by a very singular circumstance.

As he lay sleeping, it seemed to him that there was a touch on his forehead of something like a hand, and a murmur in his ear of something like a voice, and, what is more, a woman's voice. In a moment he was wide awake, and had started up and was staring around. The moonbeams streamed through the narrow windows into the room and fell in broad strips of light upon the stony floor, diffusing a mild and mellow lustre in some parts, yet leaving the rest of the great room in obscurity. And here, across those strips of light and through those moonbeams, Harry plainly discerned a figure which was gliding swiftly along. It was a female figure, and it was light and fragile, while long dusky drapery floated around it. So completely overwhelmed was Harry with amazement and bewilderment at this sight, that for full five minutes he sat without moving and stared full before him. Then he put his feet out on the floor, and, sitting on the side of the bed, slowly ejaculated, 'Well, by Jove!'

Suddenly he started up and sprang toward the place where he had last seen the vision: but now there was nothing visible; the figure, whatever it was, had disappeared. Now, Harry had a strong, robust, healthy nature, a good digestion, tough nerves, and he was not in the least superstitious; yet this event certainly made him feel as he had never felt before. It was the suddenness of it, as well as the incomprehensibility. He had to assure himself over and over again that he was really awake, and then he had to repeatedly recall the vague and indistinct impressions that had been made.

It was certainly most puzzling. How had anyone contrived to enter? And why should a woman come? Was it a woman, then—that figure—with its noiseless motion, its strange fragility, its flowing, floating, cloud-like draperies? Or was it some affection of his own disordered senses that had wrought out an apparition from his own fancy? It reminded him of those weird and grisly scenes in the old romances which he had read in his boyhood, such as the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' the 'Romance of the Forest,' or the 'Castle of Otranto.' This castle might well be the scene of such a mystery. Perhaps the late incident was the revival of some dormant memory, arising out of that half-forgotten reading in the old romances. It may have been a dream, projecting itself forward into his waking hours.

In this way Harry puzzled his brain for some time, sitting on the side of the bed, mystified, and quite at a loss what to do. But, as he was essentially a man of action, he soon grew weary of idle speculation, and determined to search more actively into the mystery, and if possible sift it to the bottom. So he drew

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a match and lighted his torch. The flame flared up brilliantly and flung a lurid glow all around. Holding this high above his head, Harry walked about, peering into the darkness, and scanning every nook and corner of the large apartment. But he could see nothing. It was empty. The shuffling noise of his own footsteps as he moved along was the only sound, and no living thing met his eye. It was plain that he was alone, and that no other could be there with him.

But that figure? Where was it? Whither had it gone? Going back again to the bed, he marked the line of its motion, and perceived that it had been directed toward the great fireplace: at that spot it had faded away from his view. What had been the cause of this? Back again he went to the great fireplace and examined it carefully. The very reading of the old romances to which he had attributed this apparition now served to give him a valuable suggestion; for, according to those important writings, wherever there is a ghost there is also a mysterious subterranean passage, or secret chamber, or concealed door. It was for this that Harry now searched, to see if any of the machinery of the castle of Udolpho might be found existing in a castle in Spain. He looked all over the floor, but found nothing. He examined the back and the sides of the fireplace, but nothing was visible save the stony surface, which everywhere had the same massive exterior. At length his attention was arrested by those stones already mentioned which projected one above the other from the side of the chimney. At first it seemed to him as though they might be movable, for he was on the lookout for movable stones or secret doors, which might slide away in the 'Udolpho' fashion and disclose secret passages or hidden chambers. He therefore tried each of these in various ways, but found them all alike, fixed and immovable.

But now, as he stood trying the topmost stone, with his torch held aloft, the glare of the light shone upon the sides of the chimney and disclosed that very opening which Russell had already discovered. At first he thought that it might be a side flue, or a ventilator, or a contrivance to help the draught; but immediately after, the thought flashed upon him that the mysterious figure might be concealed here. In an instant he began to clamber up the stones, full of eager excitement. On reaching the top he found, to his amazement, that he was in a deep niche which ran into the wall several feet, and was high enough for him to stand in. Into this he peered eagerly, thinking that he might discover his mysterious visitant, but he saw nothing. But as he thus stood gazing into the niche with sharpest scrutiny, he saw something white lying on the floor only a few feet from him. He stooped forward and picked it up.

It was a parcel, wrapped up in stiff paper, about twelve inches long, six wide, and one in thickness. It was evidently a collection of documents of some sort. Full of wonder at this strange discovery, Harry now forgot all about the mysterious apparition, and thought no more about the strangeness of the place where he was. He was only eager to learn the contents of the package, and to investigate them without being seen. Although he did not believe that any eye could behold him in that dark recess, yet he felt afraid, nevertheless, that some spy might be lurking near—some one like his late visitant—and therefore he descended once more to the room, where he felt safer. Here, after going all around, and peering out of every window, and looking also and listening at the door, he felt satisfied that he was unobserved. He now went into a corner of the room at the head of the bed and knelt down, facing the corner in such a way that he could conceal the package while examining it. Here, with eager hands, he tore it open, and the contents lay before him.

These contents consisted of a number of printed documents, all folded up so as to be of uniform size. One of these he took up and opened. It was in Spanish, with formidable flourishing signatures and immense seal. One glance was enough to show him what it was. It was a bond in which the Spanish Government offered to pay one thousand pounds English sterling money at the end of thirty years to the bearer; and at the bottom was a great array of coupons for semi-annual interest on the above, the rate of interest being six per cent., and consequently each coupon being for thirty pounds.

A great light now flashed in upon Harry's mind. Hastily he counted the documents, and found them to be thirty in number. The amount represented was therefore thirty thousand pounds. He understood it all. This was Katie's money, of which he had heard. Russell had been carrying it about his person, as he had said, and had been afraid of losing it. He had refused to make Harry his confidant as to his intentions. He had found out that niche somehow, and had hidden there the precious package. It was all Katie's, and had now by a strange chance fallen into his own hands. It struck Harry as at once very strange, and very pleasant, that all Katie's fortune should thus be placed in his care, and that he had thus become its guardian. He remembered all that Ashby had said about Russell's designs to obtain Katie's money for himself; and although he had not altogether believed Ashby, still he thought that the money was all the safer from being out of Russell's possession. Russell was not altogether trustworthy, while he himself would be loyal in this trust, and guard it with his heart's blood.

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At length he once more folded up the papers, and then, as he held the package in his hands, there arose the great and important question—what was he to do with it? To carry it about on his person was, of course, not to be thought of. He had already been examined once, and had no security that he would not be examined again. This made it necessary to find some place where they might be concealed until it should be safe to reclaim them. As for concealment, it could not be found in the room. He could not thrust it into the straw of the bed, for it would be sure to be found. Since he had been here the bed had already been examined twice. There remained, then, only the chimney, and to this place he once more directed his steps in search of a place of concealment.

He climbed up and advanced a few paces to the end of the niche. On reaching this he found, to his amazement, that it was not a niche, but a passage-way which ran on for so long a distance that, as he peered down into it, he could see no end. This passage-way served also to lessen the mystery of his late visitant. He now thought that this visitant had been one of the Carlist band, who had come in, while he was asleep, on a reconnoitring expedition. Yet, however this may have been, it did not prevent him from searching for a place of concealment in this passage-way. It might not be a good place, the hidden documents might still be liable to discovery, yet it was the only place, and so there was no choice in the matter.

As Harry looked along this passage-way he came to a huge projecting stone, which seemed as though it had been dislodged in some way. So large was this stone, and so peculiar was its dislocation, that Harry could only think of an earthquake as an adequate cause. It was about eight feet in length by four feet in height, and one end jutted forth, while the other end was sunken in, behind the surface of the wall, in a corresponding manner. At the end where the stone jutted out there was a crevice a few inches in width, which seemed well adapted for a place of concealment, and upon this he at once decided. But, to prevent the possibility of discovery, it was necessary to thrust the package far in, while at the same time it must be arranged in such a way that it could be drawn forth again. This could be done by means of the string with which it was bound up. This he took off, and tying one end to the package, he thrust it into the crevice as far as he could, quite out of sight, leaving the end of the string hanging out about one inch, in such a way that it was discernible to no one except himself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH HARRY YIELDS TO AN UNCONTROLLABLE IMPULSE,
AND RISKS HIS LIFE IN A DARING ADVENTURE.

HARRY now felt perfectly secure about the package. It seemed to him to be safely hidden, beyond all possibility of discovery ; for who could ever venture into this passage-way ? And if any one should, how could that package be seen ? Still, as to any one venturing here, he had his doubts. There was that mysterious visit. What did that mean ? It was a female figure--a woman, young, too, light, active. Who could it have been ? It must have been some one familiar with the castle. He now felt convinced that this figure was no apparition, that it was some living person, that she had come down through this very passage-way, and had entered his room, and touched him, and whispered to him. So much was clear.

And now before him lay this passage-way. He was resolved to explore it as far as possible, so as to unfold the mystery. But who was this visitor ?--a woman ! Was she friend or foe ? If a foe, why had she come ? What did she expect, or why had she spoken so gently and roused him so quietly ? If a friend, why had she fled so hurriedly, without a sign or word ? The more he thought it over, the more he felt convinced that his visitor had made a mistake ; that she had come expecting to find some one else, and had been startled at the discovery of her mistake. Perhaps Mrs. Russell had bribed one of the Carlist women to carry a message to her husband. That seemed the most natural way of accounting for it.

It was evident to Harry that this passage-way was known, and was used ; that he was at the mercy of his captor ; and that Russell had made a great blunder in hiding his package in such a place. But why had his visitor failed to discover the package ? Perhaps because she came in the dark. That would account for it. She could not have seen it ; she passed by it thus, both while coming and going.

Nevertheless, whether this passage was known and used by others or not, Harry could not help feeling that its discovery was a great thing for him. Perhaps it might lead out of the castle. That meant escape, liberty, life ! It meant more. Once outside, he felt that he could obtain help from some quarter. He would then come back with a force which would be sufficient to capture the castle and free his friends ; or, if he could not gather a large force, he might find at least a small band of men with whom he could steal in through this secret passage, and effect the rescue of his friends in that way. And

by 'his friends' he meant Katie. She, at least, could be rescued, and the best way would be to rescue her at the outset by carrying her off with him. Such were Harry's hopes and intentions.

In entering now upon this exploration, Harry felt the great necessity that there was of caution; and yet, in spite of this, the torch would have to be retained, or else any farther progress would be impossible. To crawl along in the dark might be safer, but it would effect nothing, and he could only hope that his torchlight would not be observed. Dangerous or not, he must retain it; and besides, he could not be in any greater peril than he had already been in. By this bold move, he had everything to gain and nothing to lose. There was, however, one other precaution which he would have to take, and that was to make as little noise as possible. His heavy boots would never do, and the sound might pass through even such walls as these. Removing these, therefore, he carried them under one arm, and, holding the torch in his unoccupied hand, he advanced along the passage. The stones were cold to his feet as he started on his adventurous way. Slowly, cautiously, stealthily, he moved along. The passage was about six feet in height and two feet wide, with massive stone-walls on either side. By its direction, it seemed to pass through the wall at one end of the great hall, past the place where the stairway ascended from below. Along this Harry moved noiselessly and watchfully, and at length came to a place where the passage-way turned at right angles, just as it had done at the entrance. Up this he walked, and, after a few paces, perceived an abyss before him. In an instant he understood what this was. It was another chimney similar to the one in his room, from which the passage way had started, and here too, doubtless, there was a room like his own.

He now extinguished the torch, which, together with the boots, he put down on the floor, and then, lying flat down, he thrust his head over the opening and tried to see what was below. There was a faint light, the light of moonbeams, which streamed in here and fell upon the floor, just as in his own room. He reached down his hand, and could feel that here too there were stepping-stones. In fact, there were two rooms connected by this passage-way, and in all probability they were exactly similar. But who were in this room? The men had been taken to one side of the great hall, the women to the other. Were the women here? Were they by themselves? And was Katie here? Would it be possible for him to go down so as to try to communicate with any of them? It was certainly hazardous. A discovery would ruin all. It would be better to wait, at any rate to watch here for a while and listen.

As he watched he could see somewhat better, for his eyes grew more accustomed to the dim light. He could make out the

stepping-stones, and the chimney floor, and the floor of the room for about one-third of the distance from the chimney. As he lay there and watched and listened, there came to his ears, through the deep stillness of night, the sound of regular breathing, as of sleepers, together with an occasional sigh, as of some one in a troubled dream. They were all asleep, then! Who? The Carlists, or the women attendants? or was it not rather his own friends—and—Katie? At this thought an uncontrollable desire seized him to venture down and see for himself. He might get near enough to see for himself. He could strike a match, take one look, and then, if mistaken, retreat. Dared he venture? He dared.

He raised himself, and then was about to put one foot down so as to descend, but at that very moment, as he stood poised in that attitude, he heard a faint shuffling sound below. He stopped and looked down cautiously. There, across the moonbeams, he could see a figure moving; the very same figure that he had seen moving across the moonbeams in his own room—the same slender, slight, fragile figure, with the same floating, vaporous drapery. But now he did not feel one particle of wonder or superstitious awe. He understood it all. The woman who had visited him had fled back here, and was now about to return. What should he do? He must retreat. She was evidently coming in his direction. He would go back to his own room, and wait and watch and intercept her. As Harry hesitated the woman stopped also, and listened. Then she advanced again.

Upon this Harry retreated, taking his boots and the extinguished torch, and went back again. He succeeded in regaining his own room without making any noise, and by that time he had decided on what he ought to do. He decided to stand in the fireplace, on the opposite side. The woman would come down the stepping-stones and steal into the room: he would watch her and find out what she wanted. Then he would act according to the issue of events; and at any rate he could intercept her on her return, and make her give an account of herself.

Having come to this conclusion, Harry stood there in the chimney, waiting most patiently for what seemed a very long time. He suspected that the woman might still be hesitating, but determined to wait until she should make her appearance. At length he heard a noise, which seemed to come from the passage above. It was a soft, dull, scraping, sliding noise of a very peculiar kind, the cause and the nature of which he could not conjecture. The sound came, and then stopped, and came again, and again stopped, for three or four times. Harry listened and waited. At last the sound ceased altogether, and there was the same stillness as before.

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Harry now waited for so long a time that his patience was quite exhausted, and he resolved, come what might, to go up again to the end of the passage and wait there. He knew the way now well enough. He left his torch and boots behind, and, climbing up, went along the passage, half expecting to encounter the woman, and ready to seize her and question her. But he found no one. All was still. He reached the chimney of the other room, and then, as before, he looked down. He saw the moonbeams lying on the floor; he heard the slow, low, regular breathing of sleepers, one of whom seemed still to be in that troubled dream. Familiarity with these surroundings had now made him bold.

Should he venture now, or wait longer?

Wait! Why wait? When could he hope to have a better time than the present?

But one of the women was no doubt awake—that one who had already visited him.

What of that? He cared not; he could not wait. Perhaps she was a friend—it seemed like it. At any rate he was resolved to risk it. To go back was not to be thought of. All his nerves were so wrought up, and to such an intense pitch of excitement, that sleep was impossible and any longer waiting intolerable. He determined to risk all now.

And for what?

For the chance, not of escape, but of communicating with Katie.

The fact is, as any one may see, Harry was getting in a very bad way about Katie. Else why should he make such a point about seeing her, and run such a risk, and make even the chance of his personal safety a secondary consideration? And what for? What did Katie care for him? What indeed?

These very questions had occurred to the mind of Harry himself, but they had one and all been promptly answered by that volatile young man in a way that was quite satisfactory to himself. For he said to himself that he was a poor lone man; an unfortunate captive in a dungeon; in the hands of a merciless foe; under sentence of death; with only a week to live; and that he wanted sympathy, yes, pined for it—craved, yearned, hungered and thirsted for sweet sympathy. And it seemed to him as though no one could give him that sympathy for which he pined so well as Katie. And therefore he was going down to her on this desperate errand for the sole purpose of seeing her, and perhaps of communicating with her.

A thought occurred to him at the eleventh hour, while he was on the verge of the descent, and that was to write something to her and drop it down. He might pencil something on a leaf of his pocket-book. But, after all, what would be the good of

that? Would she ever see it? Might it not be picked up by one of the waiting-women in the morning? Most likely it would be, in which case it would be carried to the chief, 'His Majesty,' and all would be revealed. He then would be conveyed to another part of the castle, and then—good-bye to the hidden package and to Katie. This thought decided him. He continued his descent.

Slowly, cautiously, and stealthily Harry began to venture down, looking behind him at every movement, and at every movement waiting and listening. No sound arose, however, except the low breathing, which was as regular as before. At length he stood upon the stone floor of the fireplace.

Here he stood and looked into the room. By this time his eyes were so accustomed to the moonlight that he could see objects with wonderful distinctness. He could see three beds, upon which were reclining three figures, all apparently buried in sleep. Like himself, all these had been compelled to lie down in their clothes, with only such additional covering as might be afforded by their own shawls and wraps.

Harry stole forward, his heart beating painfully. Upon the rude couch nearest him lay a figure that seemed familiar. The moonbeams shone full upon her. A shawl with a large stripe was drawn over her. It was Katie's shawl.

Harry came nearer.

He could see her! It was—yes, it was Katie!

There was no mistake about it. It was Katie, and she was sound asleep. He looked at her as she slept—her head thrown back, and one arm upraised, so that the little hand seemed suspended in the air. For a few moments he stood, then he sank upon his knees, and gazed in silent rapture on that sweet and beautiful face. Her breathing was soft and low—scarce audible. He bent his head down to listen. Katie stirred. She drew a long breath.

'H-s-s-s-s-sh!' whispered Harry.

At this Katie stopped breathing for a moment, and then she whispered, very softly,

'Who are you?'

'Harry,' said the other. 'Don't speak a word.'

Saying this, he reached out his hand and took hers. This was intended merely to soothe her and to reassure her, for fear that she might be startled.

'I know you would come to me,' said Katie, in a rapid and joyous whisper; 'and here you are—you dear, good boy!'

At this Harry's heart beat with a rapture that was positive pain.

'I had to come. I could not keep away,' he whispered.

'I was just dreaming that you were with me,' whispered

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Katie, 'and it all seems so awfully natural. But won't the others see you?'

'H-s-s-s-sh!' said Harry. 'They're all sound asleep.'

Katie now raised herself up on her elbow, while Harry remained kneeling on the floor.

'I think it's so lovely,' she said. 'It's so awfully nice, and jolly, and all that—in this mysterious old castle; and here, lo and behold! *you* come popping in upon one just like a romance.'

'H-s-s-s-sh! you mustn't speak.'

'But it's so awfully nice, you know, I must speak, and, besides, we're only whispering.'

'Well, whisper lower, and closer.'

Katie held her head closer to Harry, and thus these two, for purely precautionary purposes, carried on the rest of the conversation in that position. And their heads were so close that they touched; and their whispers were very soft and low. But all this was necessary; for if they had not taken these precautions, they might have wakened up old Mrs. Russell, and then, as a matter of course, there would have been the mischief to pay.

'There's too much moonlight here,' said Harry. 'Come over inside the old fireplace, and we'll be in the dark.'

'Oh, that will be so nice!' said Katie. And she at once got up and stole away to the deep, dark fireplace, where both of them were wrapped in impenetrable gloom. It was well that they did so, for at that moment something waked Mrs. Russell, who called out,

'Katie!'

'Well, auntie,' said Katie, from the depths of the fireplace.

'I thought I heard a noise.'

'Oh no, auntie; you've been dreaming,' said Katie, in a tone of sweet sympathy. 'Go to sleep again, poor dear.'

And auntie sank back into the land of dreams. After a little judicious waiting they were able to resume their interrupted conversation.

'How, in the name of wonder,' said Katie, 'did you ever, ever manage to get here?'

Harry bent down, and in a low, very low, faint whisper told her all about it, dwelling upon every little detail, and not forgetting to mention how he had longed to see her, and had risked everything for it. And Katie kept interrupting him incessantly, with soft cooing whispers of sympathy, which were exceeding sweet and precious.

And Katie proceeded to tell that she had been dreaming—and wasn't it funny?—about him; that she thought he had got into one of the windows, and was about to carry her off.

'And were you glad to see me?' asked Harry.

'Awfully!' said Katie; 'just the same in my dream as I am now, only I can't see you one bit—it's so awfully dark.'

'Are you afraid?' asked Harry, in a trembling voice.

'Afraid? Oh no. It's awfully nice, and all that, you know.'

'But shouldn't you like to get away out of this?'

'Get away?'

'Yes, if I could get off, and get you off too?'

'But how can we go?'

'Well, I don't know just yet. I only know the way from my room here, and back again; but I may find out something.'

'But that won't do any good. Don't you really know any way out?'

'Not yet, but I hope to find one; I dare say I shall before long.'

'Oh, how delicious! how perfectly delicious that would be! I do wish that you only could. It would be quite too awfully nice, you know.'

'I'll let you know. I promise you.'

'But then,' said Katie, 'you'll be going off yourself and leaving poor me behind.'

'Leave *you*?' said Harry indignantly; 'never!'

'Wouldn't you really?' asked Katie, in a tone of delight.

'Never,' said Harry. 'I wouldn't stir a step without you. I'd rather be a prisoner with you than a free man without you.'

Katie drew a long breath.

'Well,' said she, 'I think you must be a true friend.'

'I'd rather be here with you,' persisted Harry, 'than anywhere in the world without you.'

'If only your passage-way ran outside the building, wouldn't it be nice?' said Katie. 'Why, we might pop out now, and away we would go, and no one a bit the wiser.'

'And where would you like me to take you?'

'Where? Oh, anywhere!'

'But where in particular?'

'Oh, I don't care. I like Madrid very well, or London; but it's too rainy there and foggy.'

'Should you like Barcelona?' inquired Harry tenderly.

'I dare say, though I've never been there. But I don't half know what I'm talking about, and I think I've been mixing up my dreams with real life; and you come so into the middle of a dream that it seems like a continuation of it; and I'm not sure but that this *is* a dream. I'm pinching myself too, all the time, and it hurts, so that I think I must be awake. But, all the same, you really mean what you say?'

'Mean it? Why, I can't say one thousandth part of what I really mean. Don't you believe it, when you see me here?'

'But I don't see you at all,' said Katie.

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of thing

Harry looked at her for a moment, and then said abruptly :
 'Keep your shawl around you, poor little girl ; I'm afraid you'll get cold ; and with tender solicitude he proceeded to draw her shawl tighter around her slender figure. This was a work which required no little time and skill. Not a word was now spoken for some time. This was of course wiser on their part than whispering, for whispers are sometimes dangerous, and may lead to discovery. But Harry seemed troubled about Katie's health, and was never satisfied about that shawl.

'You are so very kind !' said Katie at last.

'It's because I'm so fond of—the shawl,' said Harry. 'I love to arrange it for you. I should like to take it back with me.'

'Should you really ?'

'Above all things—except one.'

'What ?'

'Why, of course, I should rather take back with me what's inside the shawl.'

'Well, I'm sure "what's inside the shawl" would like very much to get away out of this prison ; and so, sir, when you find a way, you must let her know. But won't Mr. Russell wake and miss you ?'

'Mr. Russell ? Why, he isn't with me any longer.'

'Isn't he ?'

'No. I'm all alone. They took him away, and I suppose he's alone too.'

'Oh dear ! I hope I sha'n't be left alone.'

'I hope, if you are, you may be left here.'

'Why ?' asked Katie, who knew perfectly well, but liked to hear it stated in plain words.

'Why—because I could come to see you all the time then, instead of waiting till they're all asleep.'

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH DOLORES INDULGES IN SOME REMINISCENCES OF THE PAST.

THE sleeper to whose sighs Harry had listened was Mrs. Russell, who awaked on the following morning burdened with the memories of unpleasant dreams. Dolores was bright and cheerful. Katie was as gay and as sunny as ever—perhaps a trifle more so.

'I don't understand how it is,' said Mrs. Russell, 'that you two can keep up your spirits so in this ogre's castle. I'm certain that something dreadful's going to happen.'

'Oh, auntie, you shouldn't be always looking on the dark side of things.'

'I should like to know what other side there is to look on except the dark one. For my part, I think it best always to prepare for the worst; for then when it comes one isn't so utterly overwhelmed.'

'Yes,' said Katie, 'but suppose it doesn't come? Why, then, don't you see, auntie, you will have had all your worry for nothing?'

'Oh, it's all very well for one like you. You are like a kitten, and turn everything to mirth and play.'

'Well, here is our dear, darling Dolores,' said Katie, who by this time had become great friends with the dark-eyed Spanish beauty. 'Look at her! She doesn't mope.'

'Oh no, I doesn't what you call—mopes,' said Dolores in her pretty broken English. 'I see no causa to mopes.'

'But you're a prisoner as much as I am.'

'Oh si—but thees is a land that I have a quaintance with: I know thees land—thees part.'

'Have you ever been here before?'

'Si—yes. I lif here once when a child.'

'Oh, you lived here,' said Katie. 'Well, now, do you know, I call that awfully funny.'

'My padre—he lif here in thees castello. I lif here one time—one anno—one year, in thees castello.'

'What! here in this castle?'

'Yes, here. The padre—he had grand flocks of the merino sheeps—to cultivate—to feed them in the pasturas—the sheep—one—ten—twenty thousand—the sheep. And he had thousand men shepherds—and he lif here in thees castello to see over the flocks. But he was away among the flocks alla the times. And me, and the madre, and the domesticos, we all did lif here, and it seems to me like homes.'

'But that must have been long ago?'

'Oh, long, long ago. I was vara leetle—a child; and it was long ago. Then the padre went to Cuba.'

'Cuba! What! have you been there?'

'Oh, many, many years.'

'Across the Atlantic—far away in Cuba?'

'Far, far away,' said Dolores, her sweet voice rising to a plaintive note; 'far away—in Cuba—oh, many, many years! And there the padre had a plantation, and was rich; but the insurrection it did break out, and he was killed.'

Dolores stopped and wiped her eyes. Katie looked at her, and her own eyes overflowed with tears of tender sympathy.

'Oh, how sad!' she said. 'I had no idea.'

Dolores drew a long breath.

'Yes; he died, the good, tender padre; and madre and me be left all—all—alone—alone—in the cruele world. And the

rebel came, and the soldiers, and oh, how they did fight ! And the slaves, they did all run away—all—all—all—away : and the trees and fruits all destroy ; and the houses all burn up in one gran' conflagration ; and it was one kind, good American that did help us to fly ; or we never—never would be able to lif. So we did come back to our patria poor, and we had to lif poor in Valencia. I told you I was lifing in Valencia when I left that place to come on thees travel.'

'I suppose,' said Katie, 'since you lived in this castle once, you must know all about it.'

'Oh yes, all—all about it.'

'And you must have been all over it in every direction ?'

'Oh yes, all over it—all—all over it—thousand—thousand times, and in every parts and spots.'

'It's such a strange old castle,' continued Katie, who was very anxious to find out how far the knowledge of Dolores went, and whether she knew anything about the secret passage ; 'it's such a strange old castle ; it's like those that one reads of in the old romances.'

'Yes, oh, vara, vara,' said Dolores ; 'like the feudal Gothic castellos of the old—old charming romances ; like the castello of the Cid ; and you go up the towers and into the turrets, and you walk over the top, past the battlementa, and you spy, spy, spy deep down into the courts ; and you dream, and dream, and dream. And when I was a vara leetle child, I did use to do nothing else but wander about, and dream, and dream, and get lost, and could not find my way back. Oh, I could tell you of a thousand things. I could talk all the day of that bright, bright time when my padre was like a noble ; so rich he was, and living in his grand castello.'

'And did you really wander about so ? and did you really get lost so ?' asked Katie, who was still following up her idea, being intent upon learning how much Dolores knew about the inner secrets of the castle—'such as where, now,' she added eagerly, 'where would you get lost ?'

'Oh, everywhere,' said Dolores, 'and all over. For there are halls that open into gallerias ; and gallerias that open into rooms ; and rooms into closets, and these into other halls ; and grand apartments of states ; and states bed-chambers ; and there are the upper rooms for guests and domesticos ; and down below them are rooms for the outer servitores ; and far, far down, far down underground, there are dungeons—fearful, fearful places with darkness and r-r-rats !—and that is all that you do find when you come to move about in this wonderful, this maravelloso castello.'

'And have you been all through the vaults ?' asked Katie, trying to lead Dolores on farther.

'Yes,' said Dolores, 'all—all—through all the vaults, every single one ; and there was an ancient servitor who showed me all the mysteries—an ancient, ancient, venerable man he was—and he showed me all the secrets, till all the *castello* was as known to me as this room ; and so I did become lost no more, and we did use to wander together through dark and lonely ways, and up to the turrets, and down to the vaults, till all this beautiful, beautiful old *castello* was known to me like my own room.'

While Dolores talked in this strain she grew more and more enthusiastic, and made use of a multiplicity of graceful gestures to help out her meaning. And her eyes glowed bright and her expressive features showed wonderful feeling, while her motions and her looks were full of eloquence. It was a bright and joyous past that opened to her memory, and the thought of it could not be entertained without emotion. By that emotion she was now all carried away ; and as Katie watched her glowing face and her dark gleaming eyes and all her eloquent gestures, she thought that she had never seen anyone half so beautiful. But Katie was dying with curiosity to find out how far the knowledge of Dolores extended, and so at last, taking her cue from Dolores's own word, she said :

'Dark and lonely ways ! What dark and lonely ways, dear Dolores ? That sounds as though there are secret passages through this old castle. Oh, I do so love a place with vaults and secret passages ! And are there any here, dear ? And have you been in them ever ?'

Like lightning the glance of Dolores swept over Katie's face ; and it was a sudden, swift glance, and one full of subtle questioning and caution. Katie saw it all, and perceived too, at once, that whatever Dolores might know, she would not tell it in that fashion, in answer to a point-blank question. As for Dolores, her swift glance passed, and she went on with hardly any change in her tone :

'Oh yes : the dark and lonely ways, far, far below—in the vaults and through the wide, wide walls. For they run everywhere, so that in the ancient times of wars the warriors could pass from tower to tower.'

Katie saw that Dolores was on her guard and was evading her question, from which she concluded that the little Spanish maid knew all about the secret passage-way to Harry's room. The visitor to him must have been Dolores, and no other. But why ? This she could not answer. She determined, however, upon two things—first, to keep her own eyes open and watch ; and secondly, to tell Harry all about it the next time she saw him.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH 'HIS MAJESTY' EXHIBITS THE EMOTIONS OF A ROYAL BOSOM, AND MRS. RUSSELL IS DAZZLED BY A BRILLIANT PROSPECT.

ON the following morning there was great excitement in Mrs. Russell's room. This was caused by one of the female attendants, who had come with the announcement that they were to be honoured in a short time by a visit from 'his Majesty the King.'

'The King?' exclaimed Mrs. Russell, as soon as Dolores had translated this. 'What King? Who is he?'

'The King!' said Dolores. 'He can only be one—one single person—Don Carlos—King Charles.'

'King?' cried Mrs. Russell, 'and coming here! Oh dear! what shall I do? And my dresses! and my jewels! and my toilet articles! Oh, whatever—ever—ever will become of poor me?'

'Oh, auntie, it is useless to think of that,' said Katie. 'You are a prisoner, and no one knows that so well as the "King," as he calls himself.'

Mrs. Russell, however, felt different, and continued her lamentations until 'his Majesty' himself appeared. Great was their surprise at finding this exalted personage to be no other than their Carlist chief; but they felt still greater surprise when 'his Majesty' began to address them in English, with an accent which, though foreign, was still familiar.

'We have called, ladies,' said he, with a magnificent bow, 'to wish yez all a good marrunin', an' to ax after yer healths.'

The ladies murmured some reply which was not very intelligible, in which, however, the words 'your Majesty' occurred quite frequently.

'His Majesty' now seated himself upon the only seat in the room, namely, an oaken bench, and then, with a wave of his royal hand, said:

'Be sated, ladies, be sated. Let's waive all farrums an' cirimonies, an' howld conversation like frinds. *Be sated*, we beg; it's our r'y'l will, so it is.'

The ladies looked at one another in meek embarrassment. There was nothing for them to sit on except the rough couches where they had slept; and finally, as there was nothing else to be done, they sat there, Mrs. Russell being nearest to 'his Majesty,' while Katie and Dolores sat farther away, side by side, holding one another's hands, and looking very meek and demure indeed.

'On sich occasions as these,' said 'his Majesty,' 'we love to dhrup all court ceremonial, and lave behind all our body guards, an' nobles, an' barons, an' chamberlains, an' thin fellows, an' come in to have a chat like a private gentleman.'

'Oh, "your Majesty!"' said Mrs. Russell, in a languishing tone, 'how very, very nice it must be!'

'It is that, besid; that's thine for you,' said 'his Majesty.' 'An' sure it's meself, that's the proud man this day at Andin' that yez can put a thrine interpretation on our r'y'l Majesty.'

'Ah, sire,' sighed Mrs. Russell, whose eyes fell in shy embarrassment before the dazzling gaze of 'his Majesty.'

'Ax,' resumed 'his Majesty,' 'that seemed like thrayson to our r'y'l person have unfortunately compilled us to detain yez; but we hope it'll be all right, an' that ye'll be all well thratit. We thrust we'll be able to come to ferrums av a satisfactory character.'

A murmur followed from Mrs. Russell.

'Affairs av state,' continued 'his Majesty,' 'doesnt allow us to give full an' free play to that jaynial timpirament that's our chafe an' layding fasture. It's war toime now, so it is, an' our r'y'l moind's got to be harsh, ayatayre, an' unbinding. War wid our raybellious subjax compils us to rayjuice him to obedience by fawce av armys. An' now, madame an' ladies,' continued 'his Majesty,' after a brief pause, 'I hope yez won't feel alarmed at what I'm going to say next. Ye see, our Prime Ministher has conveyed to our r'y'l ear charges against your worthy husband av a fraysonable nature.'

'My husband!' exclaimed Mrs. Russell. 'What! my John! Oh!'

'Via,' said 'his Majesty.' 'I'm towld that he's been passing himself off as Lord John Russell, the Prime Ministher av England, an' as the spicial ambassador exthraordinary from our r'y'l cousin, the Quane av England, to invistigate the state av affairs in Spain, wid an oi to raycognition av our r'y'l claims. As such we've honoured him with an aujence, an' communicated to him sival state sayerita av a highly important nature. At that toime he wint an' he tuk onjew advantage av our confidince to desayve our r'y'l moind. Upon the discovery av this offince I felt the kaynist sorrow, not for him, ladies, but for you; an' it's for your sakes that I now come here, to assure you av my tinder sympathy, an' also to ax about the fax. Is he Lord John Russell?'

Mrs. Russell had at first felt ready to faint at this woeful disclosure, but she felt the eye of majesty resting on her, and she saw something there that reassured her. She afterward told Katie, in confidence, that she could understand exactly how Queen Esther had felt when Ahasuerus held out his sceptre.

'Ah, sire!' she replied. 'Oh, your most gracious Majesty! He isn't quite a lord, sire, it's true, but he's a gentleman.'

'Sure to glory that's true,' said 'his Majesty.' 'Don't I know it?—myself does. He's a gentleman, so he is, every inch av him; an' yit may I as, madame, what made him praytind to be a British nobleman?'—

'Oh, your royal Majesty!' said Mrs. Russell, in deep distress.

'Spake on, fair an' haucheous one,' said 'his Majesty,' with great gallantry. 'Spake on. Our r'y'l bosom's full, so it is, av findist sintimints. Power forth yer story into our r'y'l ear. Come—or whisht!—Come over here an' sit by our r'y'l side.'

Saying this, 'his Majesty' moved over to one end of the bench and sat there. Unfortunately, as he placed himself on the extreme end, the bench tilted up and the royal person went down. Katie, who was always very volatile, giggled audibly, and Dolores did the same. But 'his Majesty' took no offence. The fact is, he laughed himself, and bore it all magnanimously, in fact royally. He picked himself up as nimbly as a common person could have done.

'Be the powers!' said he, 'whin the King loses his gravity, it's toime for everybody else to lose his. But come along, jool, come an' sit by our r'y'l side, an' tell us the story.'

Mrs. Russell had turned quite pale at the royal fall, and paler yet at the sound of Katie's laugh, but the words reassured her. They seemed to show that she, unworthy and humble, was singled out in a special manner to be the mark of royal favour. And why? Was it on her own account, or for some other reason? She chose to consider that it was on her own account. At the renewed request of 'his Majesty,' which was so kind, so tender, and at the same time so flattering, she could no longer resist, but with fluttering heart, shy timidity, and girlish embarrassment, she went over to 'his Majesty,' and seated herself on the bench by his side.

The manner of Mrs. Russell, which had all the airs and graces of a village coquette, together with the bashfulness of a school miss, seemed to Katie and Dolores, but especially Katie, a very rich and wondrous thing. She always knew that Mrs. Russell was a gushing, sentimental creature, but had never before seen her so deeply affected. But on this occasion the good lady felt as though she was receiving the homage of the King, and might be excused if she had all the sensations of a court beauty.

Mrs. Russell now, at 'his Majesty's' renewed request, began to explain the position of her husband. He was a tailor, it is true, but not by any means a common tailor. In fact, he associated exclusively with the aristocracy. He was very eminent in his profession. He had an army of cutters and stitchers under him. He was not a tailor, but a Merchant Taylor, and, more-

over, he was a member of the Merchant Taylors' Association, and a man of enormous wealth.

'Sure to glory,' ejaculated 'his Majesty,' as Mrs. Russell paused for breath, 'I knowed it was just that. It makes all the differ in the worruld whether a man's only a tailor wid a small "t" or a Merchant Taylor wid capital letters.'

'We keep our own carriage,' continued Mrs. Russell, bridleing and tossing her head, 'and we have our own coat-of-arms and crest—the Russell arms, you know, the same as the Duke of Bedford.'

'Dade!' said 'his Majesty,' 'so ye have the Russell arrums. I'm acquainted wid his Grace the Juke av Bedford. I seen him in Paris. He's a coninction av me own in a distant way, an' so you too must be a coninction in a distant way, being a mimber av the House av Russell.'

'Oh, sire! Oh yes—may it please your Gracious Majesty—yes. I dare say I am. Oh yes.' Mrs. Russell was quite overcome at the royal condescension.

'Sure,' continued 'his Majesty,' 'we r'y'l personages always acknowledge our cousins. You're a cousin av mine, a distant one, it's thure, but degrayds don't count wid us. Wanst a cousin, always a cousin.'

'Ah, sire!'

'I niver knowed that ye were a cousin befoor,' said 'his Majesty,' 'or else I'd saluted ye in our r'y'l fashion, just as our cousin Quane Victoria did whin she acknowledged the Imperor Napoleon. It's our way to acknowledge relationship wid the r'y'l kiss. We call it the Kiss av State. Allow me, cousin.'

And before the astounded Mrs. Russell understood his intention, 'His Majesty' put his arm round her waist, and gave her a sounding smack, which seemed to Katie like the report of a pistol.

This was altogether too much for poor Katie. She had almost lost control of herself several times already, but now it was impossible to maintain it any longer, and she went off into a wild burst of laughter. It proved contagious. Dolores caught it, and clung to Katie, burying her face against her, and half hiding it behind her.

'His Majesty' dropped his 'cousin' as though he had been shot, and, turning round, regarded the two young ladies for some minutes in silence, while Mrs. Russell sat rigid with horror at this shocking irreverence. But in the royal eye, as it rested on Katie, there was a merry twinkle, until at length the contagion seized upon 'his Majesty' himself, and he too burst forth into peals of laughter. After this even Mrs. Russell joined in, and so it happened that the King and the three ladies enjoyed quite a pleasant season.

The King at length recovered from his laughing fit, and drew himself up as though preparing for business.

'Ye see,' said he, 'Misther Russell has committed an offence against our r'y'l prayrogatives, an' ayven his being our cousin doesn't help him, so it doesn't, for ye see it's a toime av danger—the habeas corpus is suspindid, thrial by jury's done up; there's only martial law, an', be jabbers, there's a coort-martial in session at this blessed momint in the room overhead.'

'Oh, sire,' exclaimed Mrs. Russell, clasping her hands, 'they're not sitting on my poor John!'

'Sure an' it's just him, an' divil a one else, so it is; an' it 'ud be meself that 'ud be proud to git him off if I cud, but I can't, for law is law, and there ye have it; and though we are King, yet even we haven't any power over the law. *Præstat justitia, ruat cælum*. I've got no more contrhol over the law than over the weather. But we've got somethin', an' that is a heart that milts at the soight av beauty in disthress.'

'Oh, sire,' said Mrs. Russell, 'spare him!'

'His Majesty' took her hand, pressed it, and held it in his.

'Dearest cousin,' said he, 'ye ax impossibilities. Law is an' must be shuprame. Even now the coort is deciding. But in any evint, even the worst, ye have a frind in us—constant, tinder, an' throe; in any evint, no matther what, moind ye, I won't forgit. Niver, niver! I'll be throe to me word. Permit us to laymint that we had not met ye befoor the late—that is, befoor John Russell obtained this hand. Nay, dhrop not that beaucheous head, fair one. Let the r'y'l eye gaze on those charrums. Our r'y'l joy is to bask an' sun ourselves in the light av loveliness an' beauty.'

The strain in which 'his Majesty' spoke was certainly high-flown and perhaps extravagant, yet his intention was to express tenderness and sympathy, and to Mrs. Russell it seemed like a declaration made to her, and expressive of much more. She felt shocked, it is true, at the word 'late' applied to her unfortunate husband by 'his Majesty,' yet the words which followed were not without a certain consolation.

'Oh, that it were possible,' continued 'his Majesty,' 'for some of us in this room to be more to one another! Oh, that some one here would allow us to hope! Let her think av all that we could do for her. She should be the sharer av our heart an' throne. Her lovely brow should be graced by the crown av Spain an' the Injies. She should be surrounded by the homage av the chivalry av Spain. She should fill the most dazzlin' position in all the worruld. She should be the cynosure av r'y'l majistic beauty. She should have wealth, an' honors, an' titles, an' dignities, an' jools, an' gims, all powered pell-mell into her lap; an' all the power, glory, moight, majisty, an' dominion av

the impayrial Spanish monarchy should be widin the grasp av her little hand. What say ye, me fair one ?

All this florid harangue was uttered for the benefit of Katie, and, as he spoke, 'his Majesty' kept his eyes fixed on her, hoping that she would respond by some glance or sign. Yet all the time that he was speaking he was unfortunately holding the hand of Mrs. Russell, who very naturally took all this proposal to herself. 'His Majesty's' language had already seemed to convey the information that her husband had passed away from earth, and was now the 'late' John Russell ; and much as she might mourn over the fate of one so dear, still it could not be but that the devotion of one like 'his Majesty' should touch her sensitive heart. So when these last words came, and brought what seemed to her like a direct appeal, she was deeply moved.

'What say ye, me fair one ?' repeated 'his Majesty' with greater earnestness, trying to catch Katie's eye.

Mrs. Russell's eyes were modestly bent downward on the floor. She clung to the royal hand.

'Oh, sire !' she murmured. 'Oh, your Royal Majesty ! I am thine—yours forever—I cannot refuse !'

And flinging her arms about him, her head sank upon his shoulder.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH BROOKE AND TALBOT BEGIN TO GROW VERY WELL ACQUAINTED.

BROOKE's heart sank within him as, followed by Talbot, he once more entered the old mill. He knew perfectly well that his position was one of peril, and doubly so from the part which he had been playing. The jeering laugh of these merciless soldiers kept ringing in his ears ; the sneers of Lopez and his bitter taunts could not be forgotten. His disguise was no longer of any value either to himself or to Talbot ; his true character, when declared, seemed even worse in the eyes of these men than his assumed one had been. To them a Carlist was far from being so bad as a newspaper correspondent ; for while the one was an open enemy, the other was a secret foe, a traitor, and a spy. Moreover, in addition to this, there was the fact that he was an American, which, instead of disarming their rage, had only intensified it. These men called themselves Republicans, but they were Spaniards also ; and Spaniards hate Americans. They cannot forgive the great Republic for its overshadowing power which menaces them in the New World, and for the mighty attraction which it exercises upon disaffected Cubans.

Great though his own danger might be, it was not, however,

for himself that Brooke feared. It was for Talbot. Trusting herself implicitly to his care and guidance, she had assumed this attire. Among the Carlists, it would have been the best of protections and the safest of disguises. Among Republicans, it was the worst of garbs. For many of the Spanish Republicans were full of French communistic sentiments, and were ready to wage war with all priests, and ecclesiasts of all forms of religion. What could save Talbot from their murderous hands? It was too late now for her to go back. She must remain a priest, since to reveal herself in her true character would be to rush on to certain destruction. As a priest, however, she was exposed to inevitable danger; she must brave all perils; and to Brooke there seemed not one ray of hope for her safety.

They went back to the loft, and here they remained in silence for some time. At length Brooke spoke.

'Talbot !'

'Well, Brooke.'

'Give me your hand.'

The slender hand of Talbot stole into his. It was as cold as ice.

'Talbot !' said Brooke in a tremulous voice, holding her hand in a firm grasp.

'Well, Brooke.'

'Do you understand the danger we are in ?'

'Yes, Brooke.'

'Do you forgive me for my share in bringing you into it ?'

'Brooke,' said Talbot reproachfully, 'such a question is ungenerous. I am the only cause of your present danger. If you had been alone, without such a fatal incubus as me, you might easily have escaped; or, rather, you would never have fallen into danger. Oh, I know—I know only too well, that you have thrown away your life—or, rather, risked it—to save me.'

As Talbot ended, her voice died away in scarce audible tones, which were full of indescribable pathos. Brooke gave a short laugh, as usual.

'Pooh !' said he. 'Tut—tut ; stuff and nonsense. Talbot, the fact is, I've been a blockhead. I've got you into a fix, and you're the sufferer. Now I'm quite ready to die, as I deserve, for getting you into danger ; but the mischief of it is, what's going to become of you ? I swear to you, Talbot, this is now my only fear.'

'Brooke,' said Talbot, in mournful tones, 'every word of yours is a reproach to me. You force me to remember how base I have been in allowing you to sacrifice yourself for me. Oh, if I could only recall the past few hours ! if we were only back again in the tower, I would never let you go with me ; I would make my journey alone, and——'

'I think,' interrupted Brooke, 'that I shall have to shut up.

Come, now, let's make a bargain. I'll say no more about it, if you don't. Is it a bargain ?

'I suppose so.'

There was silence now for a short time, after which Brooke said :

'Talbot, lad, you don't object, do you, to my holding your hand ?

'Object, Brooke ? Certainly not.'

'It seems to have the effect,' said Brooke, 'of soothing me, and of making my self-reproach less keen.'

'When you hold my hand, Brooke,' said Talbot in a low voice, whose tremor showed unusual feeling, 'I feel stronger, and all my weakness leaves me. And I like best of all what you said to me about my not being a girl. I love to have you call me "Talbot," for it sounds as though you have confidence in poor me ; but, best of all, I love to hear you say "Talbot, lad ;" for it seems as though you look on me as your equal. Your tone is that of a brave man addressing his comrade, and the very sound of your voice seems to drive all my fear away.'

'Good boy !' said Brooke in a harsh, husky voice. After which, he cleared his throat violently, but said nothing further for a while. 'You see, Talbot, lad,' said he at last, 'it is this : I have a feeling that I can't get rid of, and I've had it ever since we left the tower. The feeling is this— that you are my younger brother. You don't understand. I'll tell you about him.'

'Your younger brother !' said Talbot, in a low voice, soft and unutterably sweet. Then a little sigh followed, and she added, 'And that I will try to be to you, Brooke, until this danger is over. But you must bear with me, and not be angry if I turn out sometimes to be a coward.'

'A coward ?' said Brooke. 'Come, I like that. Why, Talbot, boy though you are, there is enough stuff in you to fit out half-a-dozen men. You're a Talbot, to begin with ; and, in addition to that, you are that sort of a person that you would let yourself be torn in pieces for the sake of a comrade.'

'I'm glad you think that of me,' said Talbot gently.

'I was going to tell you about my younger brother,' said Brooke. 'We were in Cuba together, where the fighting was— just such a country as this—and I was trying to work my way along between the two forces so as to get to Matanzas. The danger was frightful. Neither side gave any quarter. It was a war of savages, and my chief anxiety was for poor Otto. But you never saw anyone pluckier than he was—as cool, as calm, as fearless as though he was in a parlour. So we went for weeks.'

'And what became of him ?' asked Talbot as Brooke paused.

'We escaped,' said he, 'and reached Matanzas—but there—the poor boy—died. So you see, Talbot, since you have joined me, my memory goes back to those Cuban days ; and whenever I say

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to you "Talbot, lad," it seems as though I am speaking to my dear lost Otto. And here let me say, Talbot, that if I ever seem familiar, you must not think it want of respect; think rather that I am mistaking you for Otto, and forgive it.'

'Do not say that,' said Talbot. 'I should prefer to have you think of me as "Otto," and even call me "Otto,"'

'No, Talbot, boy, you have your own name, and by that I will call you.'

'It is strange, Brooke,' said Talbot. 'We have only known one another for a short time, but it seems as though we had been friends for a lifetime. I suppose this is owing to the feeling of comradeship which has sprung up between us—or perhaps because you think of me as your younger brother. For my part, I feel as though we two were comrades, like soldiers that we read of, only my part in the business will be a miserable one, I fear. We are brothers in arms, Brooke, aren't we?'

'Brothers in arms,' said Brooke in a soft, gentle tone; 'yes, Talbot, lad, that's exactly what we are. Yes, comrade, we have a fight before us, and only each other to rely on.'

'In our family,' said Talbot, 'there is a cimeter which is an heirloom. It was brought from the East during the Crusades by an ancestor. While there, he was wounded and taken prisoner by a Saracen emir named Hayreddin. This Saracen treated him with chivalrous generosity, and a warm friendship sprung up between them. They exchanged arms, the Saracen taking Talbot's sword, while Talbot took Hayreddin's cimeter. Hayreddin set Talbot free. Afterward he himself was taken prisoner, and Talbot was fortunate enough to procure his freedom. The cimeter is the very one which my ancestor brought back from the Holy Land.'

'You and I,' said Brooke in a cheery tone, 'will be Talbot and Hayreddin. You are the Christian knight, and I am the heathen. It's a pity we can't exchange arms.'

'Yes, we can't very well do that.'

'We can exchange something, at any rate, comrade,' said Brooke. 'You have my priest's dress—let me have something of yours by way of exchange.'

'But what can I give?' said Talbot.

'Anything, from a needle to a needle-gun. It would be better if portable—an old ribbon, a portable pincushion, a bootlace.'

'I have something,' said Talbot suddenly, 'if you will take it, Brooke; but perhaps you will think it only a bother.'

'No, Talbot, lad, brother—brother in arms, and comrade of mine!—nothing that you can give shall be regarded as other than a comrade's pledge.'

Talbot withdrew her hand, which Brooke had been holding all this time.

'Here is something,' said she. 'It will do better than anything else.'

'What is it?' asked Brooke, who could not see in the gloom what it was that she offered.

'A ring,' said Talbot, in a voice that sunk to a whisper.

'A ring?' repeated Brooke. 'Is it your ring, Talbot? Then put it on my finger with your own hands, comrade, and I swear to you by a soldier's word that it shall never leave me, either in life or death.'

Talbot made no reply, but put the ring, which she had detached from her own finger, upon the little finger of Brooke's left hand. Not a word was said by either, and there was now a long silence, which was finally broken by Brooke.

'Talbot,' said he, 'don't you think you can sleep a little?'

'I'll try.'

'Do. If you could only sleep a little, I should feel very glad indeed.'

'I'll try,' said Talbot again, 'and you must not suppose that I am awake.'

Talbot now drew off for a little distance, while Brooke remained as before, and was left to his own meditations. All was still within, and outside the sounds gradually lessened, until at length they were heard no more. Slowly the time passed, and to Brooke it had never in his life seemed so long. Not a sound escaped from Talbot. Was she asleep?

'Talbot, lad!' said Brooke, in a low voice.

'Well, Brooke,' was the gentle reply.

'Have you been asleep?'

'Oh—well—a little.'

'No, Talbot,' said Brooke, 'you have not been asleep. And you say that you were merely to make it pleasant for me. You are full of anguish, Talbot, but you keep up a cheerful tone so as not to add to my burdens. You see I know it all, Talbot, and understand you thoroughly, so there need not be any further dissimulation.'

'Brooke,' said Talbot, 'you are feverish from anxiety, and fanciful. Be yourself. Sing one of your droll songs. Talk nonsense. If you go on in this mournful strain, you will make me break down utterly.'

At this Brooke drew a long breath.

'Forgive me, Talbot,' he said. 'I really don't know what has come over me. If I were alone I could sleep as sound as a top, but anxiety about another is a different thing. Still, you are right, and I mean to turn the conversation to some other subject. A song, did you say? Very well. By-the-bye, did you ever hear this?'

“ Oh, Jenny Jones was a lovely gal,
And her mother worked a mangle;
She fell in love with a fine young lad,
Who played on the triangle.”

Brooke hummed this, and then stopped.

‘ I never heard it before,’ said Talbot. ‘ Sing the rest. Now you are yourself again. Whatever you feel, Brooke, don’t speak of it, but laugh, and jest, and sing old scraps of song.’

‘ I won’t,’ said Brooke. ‘ I’ll sing nothing more, and I’ll say nothing more.’

Talbot made no reply.

Brooke was true to his resolution, and said not another word. Talbot was as silent as he. Each had thoughts which were all-engrossing. Neither spoke, but each knew perfectly well that the other was wide awake, and full of care.

Thus the night passed away, with its long, long hours. It seemed interminable; but at length it came to an end, as all nights must, however long. The dawn came, and the two could see each other. Each sat propped up against the wall. Neither one spoke for a long time, until it was broad day, when Brooke, who had been watching Talbot’s face until it grew fully revealed, broke the silence with a slight cough. Talbot turned and smiled.

‘ Good-morning,’ said Brooke. ‘ We seem to be having quite a spell of weather. Quite a fine view from these windows. You haven’t been out yet, I suppose?’

‘ Not yet,’ said Talbot.

‘ Well,’ said Brooke, ‘ we must take a walk after breakfast :

“ Oh, if I was the owner of London town,
I’d buy my love a scarlet gown—
A gown of scarlet bombazine,
And away we’d travel to Gretna Green.”

‘ Have you ever been there?’ asked Talbot, trying to assume Brooke’s own careless tone.

‘ Yes, Talbot; of course I have. Every American makes a pilgrimage there when he visits England. As the poet says :

“ I have been there, and still would go;
’Tis like a little heaven below.”

Talbot !

Brooke’s voice changed.

‘ Well, Brooke.’

‘ Can you be sure of yourself this day? Can you stand it?’

‘ Yes, Brooke.’

‘ Are you sure?’

‘ Yes, Brooke.’

‘ Oh, Talbot, Talbot! don’t shrink! Oh, Talbot, don’t falter! For my sake, don’t let me see you falter, Talbot, or I shall break

down. Alone I could let myself be tortured to death by Comanches, and I'd sing my death-song as bravely as Mullins Bryan : but mark this, Talbot : if you break down, if you even falter, I'm a lost, ruined, and dishonoured man. Will you remember that, Talbot ?

As he spoke these words, Brooke's voice had a thrill in it that Talbot had never heard before.

'Brooke,' said she, 'I will be firm. Rather than show any weakness, I will die.'

'That's very good,' said Brooke. 'Your hand on it, Talbot.'

She held out her hand. He pressed it with a convulsive grasp.

'You will not forget ?' he asked eagerly.

'I cannot forget,' she answered simply.

'Good lad !' said Brooke.

He dropped her hand, and at once resumed his careless manner.

'And now,' said he, 'we can continue our music :

" 'For there the historic blacksmith stands '"—

Gretna Green, you know—

" 'And hammers away at the marriage bands.' "

Only he don't do so now, you know, for he's dead and gone, and they've got new marriage laws.'

Not long after this a man came up with a flask of wine and some rolls. Brooke took them from him and brought them over.

'Talbot,' said he, 'you don't want to eat—in fact, at this moment you hate food. But while I am with you I'm your master, and I now command you to eat. Moreover, let me add that it is necessary to eat, or else you may grow faint ; and then, when there comes a chance of escape, you won't be able to walk, and I shall have to carry you, don't you see ? And now won't you eat, just for the sake of saving me from unnecessary fatigue ?'

'I will eat if you will,' said Talbot.

'Eat !' exclaimed Brooke. 'What ! I eat ? Oh, well, I don't mind. For that matter, I'd just as soon eat a pair of boots as not.'

He broke off a fragment of bread and ate it. Talbot did the same, and thus both forced themselves to eat, and each did this for the sake of the other.

They said nothing while thus forcing themselves to eat. The thought that was present to each was enough to occupy the mind, and it was one which could not be put in words. Brooke saw Death awaiting himself, and, worse than that, he saw Talbot—alone, friendless, despairing, in the hands of remorseless fiends. Talbot, on the other hand, saw Death awaiting Brooke, and never

could shake off the torturing thought that his death was owing to her, and that he was virtually dying for her. Had it not been for her he might still have been safe. And it seemed to her to be a very hard and bitter thing that such a man as this should have to die in such a way, and that she should be the cause. Ah ! it became very hard for her to keep her promise to maintain her coolness, and to force back those tears and those cries that were ready to burst forth beyond control. Yet such was this girl's high nature, that she could crush down her weak woman's heart, and turn towards Brooke a face in which there was not a trace of emotion, and speak in a voice without a tremor.

Soon a man appeared once more, thrusting his head up into the loft, and in a stern voice he ordered them to come down.

Brooke rose. He did not look at Talbot. He walked toward the ladder, droning out in a nasal whine, to a most extraordinary tune, the following words :

"Come on, you tarnel Mingo,
I'll make you walk your chalks ;
D'ye think I care, by jingo !
For all yer tomahawks ?
I'm more of salamander
And less of mortal man :
You cannot shake my dander,
I'm a rale American !"

At the opening he paused, and looked back at Talbot's pale face.

'Did you ever hear the death-song of Mullins Bryan ?' he asked.

'No,' said Talbot.

'H'm ! I suppose not,' said Brooke.

He then went down, and Talbot followed.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW TALBOT HAS LIFE AND FREEDOM OFFERED, AND, HOW SHE DECLINES THE OFFER.

OUTSIDE, Lopez was seated upon a stone, which stood close by the foundation wall of the mill, and near him were about a dozen of his followers. The rest of the band were at a distance, and were all variously occupied. Some were lolling on the grass, smoking ; others were lying down as though trying to sleep ; others were squatting on their haunches in groups, talking and gesticulating ; others were wandering away in different directions.

All this was taken in at a glance by Brooke as he came out, followed by Talbot, after which he turned and faced Lopez.

The latter regarded him with sharp scrutiny for some time, after which he looked in the same way at Talbot. The gaze was returned by Talbot calmly, quietly, and unshrinkingly, without boldness, and yet without shyness. It was as though she wished to read the true character of this man, so as to see what hope there might be.

'Your name !' said Lopez to Brooke, in a tone of command.

'Raleigh Brooke,' said he.

'Señor Brooke,' said Lopez, 'you must be aware that the accounts which you gave of yourself last night were very contradictory. Even at the best, you are, according to your own statement, a newspaper correspondent, which in our eyes is the same as a spy. But more than this, you confess yourself to be an American, which makes it still worse. And so, señor, you see that you are in an awkward position. But this is not all. There is something more that I must ask. You speak of having come on in trains—that were stopped. Were you not on that train which was stopped by the Carlists ?'

'No,' said Brooke firmly, and without a moment's hesitation.

That was false, of course ; but Brooke had already identified himself with Talbot, for her sake, and had told a story which he was now forced to adhere to. It would have been far better if he had told the truth at the outset, but it was too late now. So he answered 'No.'

'One of our men came on by the train in which you say you came,' continued Lopez, 'and has no recollection of you.'

'Very possible,' said Brooke coolly ; 'and I don't suppose I have any recollection of him. People can't remember all who come and go in railway trains, even in America, where all the carriages are in one ; but here, where each car is divided into coaches, how can one know anything about his fellow-passengers ?'

'I came in the train that was stopped by the Carlists,' said Lopez.

'Did you see me there ?' asked Brooke.

'No,' said Lopez ; 'but there was a priest.'

'Was that the priest ?' asked Brooke, pointing to Talbot.

'No,' said Lopez—'not at all. This priest that I refer to had a beard, and wore spectacles : he was a totally different man from your friend.'

Lopez now paused and reflected for a few moments.

'Come,' said he at length, 'I'll give you a chance. I'm not cruel ; I hate bloodshed ; and I don't care about shooting prisoners, even when they're spies. We all look on you as a spy, but I'll give you a chance to save yourself. I'll tell you all frankly. It is this : I myself came on in that train that was stopped by the Carlists. In that same train there was a party of English ladies and gentlemen. All of the passengers, myself

included, were robbed ; but, mark you, while the natives were permitted to go away in safety, these English—ladies, mind you, as well as gentlemen—were detained by the Carlists. Now, of course, these so-called Carlists are merely brigands, or else they would not have captured and robbed a party of inoffensive travellers, and still less would they have detained them as prisoners. They are brigands, then, and of course they intend to exact a ransom from their prisoners, and of course if the ransom is not paid they will shoot every one of them.

‘Well, after I had escaped from their clutches I communicated at once with the military authorities, and reported the capture of these travellers. They immediately ordered me to take a detachment of men and set off in pursuit. This is our present errand. You now know all ; and if you are a true man, you will at once not only sympathize with our present undertaking, but you will lend us all the aid in your power ; you will tell us all you know, you will be as frank with me as I have been with you, and help us to save these unfortunate ladies from a fate worse than death.’

‘Señor captain,’ said Brooke, without hesitating for one instant, ‘I thank you for your frankness, but it is of no possible value to me. I have come from a different direction, and cannot be of the slightest assistance in this matter.’

‘Oh, very well,’ said Lopez coldly. ‘As I said before, I am merciful, and hate shooting prisoners in cold blood. But mark this : if it is necessary I will not hesitate. I will allow you this day to think over what I have said. And now, what about this priest ?’

‘He is an English priest,’ said Brooke calmly, ‘and cannot understand Spanish.’

‘Very well, you shall act as interpreter. In the first place, his name and residence ?’

‘Sydney Talbot,’ said Brooke, ‘of London.’

‘What are you doing in this country ?’ asked Lopez directly of Talbot.

‘I came on a visit to Barcelona,’ said Talbot in reply, as Brooke translated the question.

‘For what purpose ?’

‘On a visit to friends.’

‘What friends ?’

‘English people.’

‘Name ?’

‘Rivers,’ said Talbot calmly, and without a moment’s hesitation.

All this was news to Brooke, who had never learned her private history or the secret of her journey to Spain.

‘You do not know the language ? You cannot have been long in Spain ?’

'No—only a week.'

'A very short visit,' said Lopez. 'Did you come so far only to remain a week?'

'No,' said Talbot, 'I expected to stay much longer.'

'Why did you not stay?'

'Because I found on my arrival that the family had left Barcelona.'

'Where did they go?'

'I have no idea.'

'Were they not expecting you?'

'I supposed that they were expecting me, and I am quite unable to account for their departure and their failure to meet me.'

'And so you set out on your return home?'

'Yes.'

'Well,' said Lopez, 'your story is a little absurd, yet not at all improbable. I dare say there was a mistake somewhere.'

'There must have been—yet I don't know.'

'Young sir,' said Lopez, after a pause, 'you carry your character in your face. You at least are not a spy. Upon that I would stake my life. I wish I could say as much for your companion. All Spaniards—at least all Republicans—would not let a priest off so easily; but you are different, and I could no more suspect you than I could suspect the Apostle St. John. Señor, you are free; you may go on your way at once.'

'Señor, you are free, and may go on your way at once,' repeated Brooke, as a flush of joy passed over his face. 'Go, Talbot, go,' he added earnestly; 'go at once!'

But Talbot did not move.

'I am deeply grateful, captain,' said she, 'but I prefer to remain with my friend.'

'Talbot!' cried Brooke.

'Tell him what I say,' was Talbot's calm reply.

'You are mad!' groaned Brooke.

'What is all this?' cried Lopez angrily. 'What does the priest say?'

'The priest says that he will not go,' replied Brooke; 'that he will stay by me.'

'Oh, he does, does he?' said Lopez. 'Well, that's all the better for you. You'll need him, especially if you persist in your obstinacy.'

Brooke translated this, and Talbot listened without a word.

Brooke was now ordered back into the mill, and he went, Talbot following. On reaching the loft, they both were silent for a long time. Brooke spoke first.

'Oh, Talbot, Talbot!' he cried in a reproachful voice, 'why didn't you go? You had the chance.'

'Go!' exclaimed Talbot. 'What! go and leave you?'

'Of course,' said Brooke.

'What! when you have risked your life, and are in such danger of death, for me? Oh, Brooke, Brooke! Is this, then, your opinion of me? Can you think me capable of such utter baseness?'

'Talbot,' said Brooke, 'it was to save your life that I left the tower, and now you will not save yourself.'

'Save myself! save my worthless life! I should scorn it, if I must leave you to die. Never! never! Now, may God do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me—that is, till we escape and are out of danger. We must escape together. You shall never lay down your life for me.'

Talbot spoke with the air of one whose resolution was immovable. Brooke's agitation was intense.

'Talbot,' he cried, 'you are mad. You don't know these men. They are remorseless fiends. They will wreak their vengeance on you as well as on me.'

'Let them,' said Talbot firmly.

'I tell you,' cried Brooke in vehement tones, 'that I have a duty to perform and a battle to fight. I have to be constant until death to my duty; but if you stay by me—if you remain—if you are still in peril—oh, Talbot! I shall be false to my duty—for your sake.'

'No, Brooke, said Talbot, 'you will never be false to your duty for my sake. You will be true, and I will stand by you. You shall never see me deserting you. If you have any friendship for me, you will be glad to see your friend by your side in the hour of your trial.'

'It's not that—it's not that!' cried Brooke. 'Good heavens! you will not understand. Do you not see that if you remain you will soon be alone in the world, and then—who will defend you?'

'I understand well what you mean,' said Talbot firmly. 'You expect to die, and do not wish to leave me here alone among these ruffians. Never fear for me. Heaven will protect me. But you must know this well, and I say it once for all, I will not leave you. I cannot be false or dishonourable. I can die. Yes, Brooke, I can die, for I remember how you told me that I am an English lad. We Talbots have given up our lives in every generation for what we believe to be the good cause; and the last of the Talbots can die gladly rather than desert a friend.'

Brooke turned away. A sob burst from him. In vain he tried to restrain it. Then there followed an exceedingly bitter cry.

'Talbot! Talbot! By heaven, you'll break my heart!'

'Oh, Brooke!' cried Talbot, 'be calm—oh, be calm! I say to you, as you said to me, be calm *for my sake*; for if you lose your self-control I shall break down utterly.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH BROOKE AND TALBOT EXCHANGE CONFIDENCES.

AFTER some time Brooke grew calmer.

'And now,' said Talbot, 'tell me all that took place between you and this officer, for I have not understood.'

Brooke told her all.

'And why can't you do what he asks?' said Talbot, in surprise. 'Why can't you take them to that castle? You were there, and when there you say you recognised the Carlist chief himself, the very man who stopped the train. He must have the English prisoners there. Do you mean to say that you will not help those poor captives?'

'I cannot,' said Brooke.

'Cannot?'

'Look here, Talbot! I've thought it all over and over, and I cannot. Honour forbids. Let me explain. You see, while wandering about here, I have frequently fallen into the hands of either party, and have often been in as great danger as now, yet I have always escaped. More than this, I have papers from the leading men of both sides, which testify to my character. I am therefore in honour bound never, under any circumstances, to betray one party to the other, and that, too, no matter what my own feelings may be. I came here as a neutral, a stranger, a correspondent, to get information for the distant American public. That is my business here. But the moment I begin to betray one of these parties to the other in any shape or way, the moment I communicate to others the information which I may have gained in confidence, that moment I become an infernal scoundrel.'

'True, Brooke, very true!' said Talbot; 'but don't you see how different this thing is? Here is a party of travellers captured by brigands, and held to ransom. You are merely asked to show the way to their prison, so that they may be set free by their friends. What betrayal of confidence is there in this?'

'I say that in any way in which I tell one of these parties about the doings of the other, I betray the confidence which has been placed in me.'

'And I say, Brooke, that if you leave these English ladies in the hands of merciless villains to languish in captivity, to suffer torment, and perhaps to die a cruel death, you will be guilty of an unpardonable sin—an offence so foul that it will haunt your last hours!'

'No woman,' said Brooke, 'can understand a man's sense of honour.'

'Sir,' said Talbot, with indescribable haughtiness, 'you forget

my name. Trust me, sir, no Talbot ever lived who failed one jot or tittle in the extremest demand of honour. I, sir, am a Talbot, and have no need to go to you for information on points of honour. More than this, I say that you are utterly wrong; and that if you leave those English ladies in the hands of these Spanish miscreants you will do foul offence, not only to the honour of a gentleman, but even to the instincts of humanity.'

'Forgive me, Talbot,' said Brooke meekly. 'I don't mean what you think. When I spoke of a man's sense of honour, I referred to his life of action, with all its conflict of duty and honour, and all those complicated motives of which a woman in her retirement can know nothing.'

'Believe me, Brooke,' said Talbot earnestly, 'women who are lookers-on are often better and safer judges than men who are in the midst of action. Trust me, and take my advice in this matter. What! is it possible that you can have the heart to leave these English ladies to a fate of horror among brigands?'

'You put it strongly, Talbot, but that is only a partial view. In brief, you ask me to betray to the enemy a place which I may inform you happens to be one of the cardinal points in the strategy of the Carlist generals. I do not know for certain that the ladies are there; and if they are, I do not believe that they will be badly treated. A ransom will perhaps be exacted, but nothing more. On the whole, I should far rather fall into the hands of the Carlists than the Republicans. The Carlists are generous mountaineers, the peasantry of the North; the Republicans are the communist mobs of the Southern cities. I have seen very much of both sides, and think the Carlists better men every way—more chivalrous, more merciful, and more religious. I am not afraid about those prisoners. I feel convinced that when the general hears of their capture he will set them free himself. At any rate, I cannot interfere. To do so would be a hideous piece of treachery on my part. For me to betray to the Republicans this great and important Carlist fortress, which has become known to me by the favour and the confidence of the Carlist chiefs, would be a thing of horror and dishonour. I would die first, Talbot. So don't say any more. If anything could make me false to my honour and duty, it would be your entreaties. I may be wrong, after all, but I must act by my own sense of right. Would you wish me to save my life, and always afterwards have the thought that I had stained my honour?'

'No, Brooke,' said Talbot; 'and since you feel in this way I will say no more about it.'

Silence now followed. Brooke seated himself on the floor with his back against the wall, and Talbot stood looking at him as he thus sat.

This man, who led a life which required some of the qualities

of the hero, had nothing particularly heroic in his outward aspect. He was a man of medium size, and sinewy, well-knit frame. He had keen, gray eyes, which noticed everything, and could penetrate to the inner core of things; close-cropped hair, short serviceable beard, of that style which is just now most affected by men of restless energy; a short, straight nose, and a general air of masterful self-restraint and self-possession. Not a handsome man, strictly speaking, was our friend Brooke; not by any means a 'lady's man'; but he was something better, inasmuch as he was a manly man, one who would be trusted thoroughly and followed blindly by other men, ay, and by women too; for, after all, it is not the lady's man who is appreciated by true women, but the man's man. To such as these the best sort of women delight to do reverence. Add to this Brooke's abrupt manner, rather harsh voice, inconsequential talk, habit of saying one thing while thinking of something totally different, love of drollery, and dry, short laugh, and then you have Brooke complete, who is here described simply because there has not been any very convenient place for describing him before.

Shortly after the examination of the prisoners, the greater part of the band had gone away with the captain, and only half a dozen men were left behind on guard. After Brooke had grown tired of his own meditations, he wandered toward the window and looked out. Here he stood watching the men below, and studying their faces until he had formed his own conclusion as to the character of each one.

'I'm trying,' said he to Talbot, who came near, 'to find out which one of these fellows is the most susceptible of bribery and corruption. They're all a hard lot; the trouble is that one watches the other so closely that I can't get a fair chance.'

'I wonder where the others have gone,' said Talbot.

'Oh, they've gone off to search for the prisoners, of course,' said Brooke. 'I don't believe they'll find anything about them on this road; and as for the castle, they'll be unable to do anything there unless they take cannon.'

At length the opportunity arrived for which Brooke had been waiting. The guards had wandered off to a little distance, and only one man was left. He was just below at the door of the mill. Brooke was glad to see that he was the ugliest of the lot, and the very one whom he had mentally decided upon as being the most corruptible. Upon this man he began to try his arts.

'Good-morning, señor,' said he insinuatingly.

The man looked up in a surly way, and growled back something. 'Do you smoke?' asked Brooke.

The man grinned.

Upon this Brooke flung down a small piece of tobacco, and then began to address himself to further conversation. But alas

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for his hopes! He had just begun to ask where the others had gone and where the man belonged, when a flash burst forth, and a rifle ball sung past him through the window just above his head. It was one of the other ruffians who had done this, who at the same time advanced, and with an oath ordered Brooke to hold no communication with the men.

'I may stand at the window and look out, I suppose?' said Brooke coolly.

'We have orders to allow no communication with the prisoners whatever. If you speak another word you'll get a bullet through you.'

Upon this Brooke concluded that his plan was a failure.

Evening came at length, and the darkness deepened. The band were still absent. The men below were perfectly quiet, and seemed to be asleep.

'I have a proposal to make,' said Talbot, 'which is worth something if you will only do it.'

'What is that?'

'I have been thinking about it all day. It is this: Take this priest's dress again, and go. The priest, you know, is not a prisoner. He stays voluntarily. He has leave to go whenever he wishes. Now, you are the real priest, I am not. I am wearing your dress. Take it back, and go.'

Brooke looked at her for a few minutes in silence. It was too dark for her to see the look that he gave her.

At length, with his usual short laugh, he said:

'Well, that's a refreshing sort of a proposal to make, too, after all that has passed between us?'

'Why not?' asked Talbot. 'What objection is there to it?'

'Such a question,' said Brooke, 'does not deserve an answer.'

'My plan is feasible enough, and quite safe too.'

'Nonsense! And what, pray, is to become of you?'

'Never mind that. Think of yourself, Brooke, for once in your life. To stay here is certain death for you. This is your very last chance.'

Brooke was silent for a little time.

'Well,' said Talbot, 'will you go?'

'Oh, Talbot! Talbot!' cried Brooke; 'how can you have the heart to make such a proposal to me? I have told you that the only thing that moves me is the thought of your danger. Death is nothing to me: I've faced it hundreds of times.'

'It is preposterous to talk in that way!' said Talbot excitedly. 'My danger? I deny that there is any danger for me. As an English lady, I shall be safe in any event. I'm sorry I ever took this disguise. If you take it back you can go away now in safety. When they find that you have gone, they may perhaps threaten a little, but that is all. They will have nothing against

me, and will, no doubt, set me free. This captain seems to be a gentleman, and I should have no fear of him. I believe that after the first explosion he would treat me with respect, and let me go.'

'And so you would really let me go?' said Brooke, after a long pause, in a very low voice.

'Gladly, gladly,' said Talbot.

'And stay here alone, in a new character, ignorant of the language, to face the return of the mad and furious crowd?'

'Yes.'

'They would tear you to pieces!' cried Brooke.

'They would rot.'

'They would.'

'Then let them. I can die,' said Talbot calmly.

'And die for me?'

'Yes, rather than let you die for me.'

'And you think I am capable of going away?' said Brooke, in a faltering voice.

At this Talbot was utterly silent. Neither spoke a word for a long time.

'Talbot, lad,' said Brooke at length, in a gentle voice.

'Well, Brooke?'

'I am glad that I met with you.'

'Are you, Brooke?'

'I should like to live,' he continued, in a far-off tone, like one soliloquizing, 'after having met with you; but if I cannot live, I shall be glad to think that I have ever known you.'

Talbot said nothing to this, and there was another long silence.

'By-the-bye,' said Brooke at last, 'I should like to tell you something, Talbot, in case you should ever happen to meet with a certain friend of mine—you might mention how you met with me, and so on.'

'Yes,' said Talbot, in a low voice.

'This friend,' said Brooke, 'is a girl.'

He paused.

'Yes,' said Talbot, in the same voice.

'It was in Cuba that I met with her. Her name is Dolores.'

'Dolores—what?'

'Dolores Garcia.'

'I shall remember the name.'

'I was correspondent there, in just such a country as this, between two hostile forces. One evening I came to a place where a gang of insurgent Cubans were engaged in the pleasing task of burning a house. As it happened, I was wearing the dress common to the insurgents, and passed for one of themselves. Pressing into the house, I found two ladies—a young girl and her mother—in an agony of terror, surrounded by a howling crowd of ruffians. In a few words I managed to assure them of

my help. I succeeded in personating a Cuban leader, and in getting them away. Then I passed through the crowd outside, and, getting horses, I hurried the ladies off. Eventually we all reached Havana in safety. I learned that an attack had been made on the plantation, that Señor Garcia had been killed, and that as I came up the gang was plundering the place and threatening to destroy the women.

'Gratitude had the effect of making this young girl Dolores most devotedly attached to me. In the course of our journey she evinced her affection in a thousand ways. She was very young, and very beautiful, and I could not help loving her. I was also deeply moved by her passionate love for me, and so I asked her to be my wife, and she consented. After reaching Havana, Spanish manners did not allow of our seeing much of one another. Shortly afterward I had to return to the seat of war to finish my engagement, and bade her good-bye for two or three months. I expected at the end of that time to return to Havana and marry her.

'Well, I went away and heard nothing more from her. At the end of that time I returned, when, to my amazement, I learned that she had gone to Spain, and found a letter from her which gave me the whole reason for her departure. I had told her before that I myself was going to Spain in the course of another year, so she expressed a hope of seeing me there. The place to which she was going was Pampeluna. I've already tried to find her there, but in vain. The fact is, things have been so disturbed about here, that people have changed their abodes, and can no longer be traced; and so I have never come upon the track of Dolores. And I mention this to you, Talbot, so that if you should ever, by any chance, happen to meet her, you may tell her that you saw me, and that I had been hunting after her all through Spain. I dare say it will soothe her, for she loved me most passionately, and must often have wondered why I never came for her. In fact, she was so gentle, so delicate, so sensitive, and yet so intense in her feelings, that I have often feared that the idea of my being false might have been too much for her loving heart, and may have cut short her young life.'

After the conclusion of this story, Talbot asked many questions about Dolores, and the conversation gradually changed, until at length it came round to the cross-questioning of Lopez which Talbot had undergone.

'I have never told you,' said she, 'about my own errand here in this country; and as this may be our last conversation, I should like very much to tell you all.'

Thus this confidence of Brooke's led to a similar act on the part of Talbot, who now related to him her own history. As this has been already set forth from the lips of Harry Rivers, it

need not be repeated here. Brooke listened to it in silence. At the close he merely remarked :

'Well, Talbot, we've now made our final confessions. This is our last interview. And I feel sad, not, my lad, at the thought of death, but at the thought of leaving you among these villains. My only thought is what will become of you.'

'It's strange,' said Talbot, in a musing tone, 'very strange. All this that I have been telling you seems now removed back away to a far, far distant past. It is as though it all happened in a previous state of existence.'

'I dare say,' said Brooke. 'Oh yes; you see you've been having a precious hard time of it.'

'Yes,' mused Talbot. 'Fear, hope, suspense, shame, grief, despair; then fear, suspense, and despair; then hope and joy, followed again by despair. So it has been, and all in a few days. Brooke, I tell you I am another person altogether from that girl who left her home so short a time ago. Miss Talbot—where is she? I am the lad Talbot—comrade of a brave man—fighting with him for my life, and now along with him resting in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.'

'Bosh!' said Brooke, in a husky, choking voice.

He muttered a few unintelligible words, and then ceased.

'Death is near, Brooke—very near; I feel it.'

'Talbot,' said Brooke, with something like a groan, 'talk of something else.'

'It's near to you.'

'Well, what if it is?'

'And it's near to me.'

'It's not; I tell you it's not,' cried Brooke excitedly.

'It was the old fashion of chivalry, upheld by all the Talbots, that the page or the squire should never survive the chief. I'm a Talbot. Do you understand me, Brooke?'

'If they did so,' cried Brooke, in stronger excitement, 'they were a pack of cursed fools.'

"He that fights and runs away
May live to fight another day."

That's my motto.'

'Do you think I'll survive you?' asked Talbot, taking no notice of Brooke's words.

Brooke gave a wild laugh.

'You'll have to, my boy—you'll have to.'

'I'm your page, your vassal,' said she. 'I'm a Talbot. We've exchanged arms. I've flung away the girl life. I'm a boy—the lad Talbot. We're brothers in arms, for good or evil, Brooke.'

Brooke began to whistle, and then murmured some words like these :

'Non ego perfidum
Dixi sacramentum : ibimus, ibimus,
Utcunque præcedes, supremum
Carpere iter comites parati.'

'What do you say?' asked Talbot.

'Oh, 'nothing,' said Brooke; 'dog Latin—some rubbish from Horace. Allow me, however, to remark, that all this talk about death seems to me to be cursed bad taste.'

After this he began to whistle a tune. Suddenly he held up his hand so as to display the ring.

'Who gave you this?' he asked carelessly.

'Mr. Rivers,' said Talbot simply. 'It was our engagement ring.'

Brooke gave his usual short laugh, and subsided into silence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH BROOKE AND TALBOT STAND FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH.

THIS was to be to Brooke his last day in life. The thought of this was ever present to both of them. The band would probably return during the night, and in the morning the last scene would be enacted. In the few days in which these two had known each other they had been compelled to undergo great variations of feeling, and had come to learn each other's inmost nature more thoroughly and intimately by far than could have occurred after years of ordinary social intercourse. Together they had faced danger and death; together they had endured hope and fear, hunger and weariness, sorrow and despair. The feelings of each had been stirred to the uttermost depth. Strong natures were they, both of them; and they both were capable of self-control, and they each knew how to wear an aspect of calmness while all the time the soul within was in a tumult of terror or distress. This night was to be the last on earth to one of them, perhaps to both. So they said but little. They could but sit in silence, and think, and feel, and suffer.

At midnight there was a wild clamour outside. The band had returned. The prisoners went to the window, and there, standing side by side, they looked out. Brooke thought that his hour might even now be at hand, and the same fear occurred to Talbot. Neither spoke. So for a long time they stood watching, listening, until at last the sounds died away, all movement ceased, and all was still. The men had gone to rest, and they now knew that there would be a respite until morning. They stood looking out into the night. If a thought of flight had ever occurred to either

of them, they could now see that such a thing was impossible. For they were environed with guards ; and in the room below and on the grass outside the followers of Lopez lay between them and liberty.

'Brooke,' said Talbot, 'if you were now alone I know very well what you would do.'

'What ?'

'You would draw your revolver, jump down, burst through the midst of these men, and escape. Why not do so now ?'

Brooke gave a short laugh.

'Do ! Leave me ! Fly ! They cannot blame me if you fight your way through them. Better to die fighting than be shot down helplessly.'

'If I did so, they'd take out their vengeance on you.'

'They would not.'

'They would.'

'Then you stay for me !'

'Yes.'

Talbot drew a long breath.

'You are bent on dying, Brooke, not to save me, but merely to prevent them from being too hard to me.'

'They will let you go,' said Brooke. 'They will be satisfied—when I am gone.'

Talbot seized his hands in a convulsive grasp.

'Oh, Brooke !' she groaned. 'Can nothing move you ? What is life worth to me at such a cost ? Oh, Brooke, fly ! Leave me. Fight your way out. I will follow you.'

'You cannot. If you tried, you would be sure to be captured. I might escape, as you say, but you could not.'

'Oh, Brooke, try—fly ! Oh, I could kill myself rather than endure this any longer.'

'Talbot !' said Brooke, suddenly shaking her off.

'What, Brooke ?'

'You're a fool !'

'Yes, Brooke.'

'You're a fool !' he repeated, in a voice that sounded like a gasp. 'Why will you persist in talking in this way, and blight and shatter all my strength of soul ? It's too late, I tell you. I will not. I will not do anything that can expose you to fresh danger ; your peril is great enough now, but there is a bare chance for you if nothing happens. When they have got one life they may feel inclined to spare the other.'

'Never !' said Talbot. 'They shall not. I will not have it.'

'You must !' said Brooke fiercely.

'I tell you I will not !' cried Talbot in a passionate voice.

'D—n you !' roared Brooke. 'I tell you you must, and you shall !'

At this there was a noise below. Some of the guard had awakened. Brooke drew a long breath, and retreated from the window into the darkness. Talbot went after him.

'Talbot,' said Brooke, in a voice that was strangely sweet yet unutterably sad—'Talbot, do you want to break my heart?'

'Brooke,' said Talbot, in a low, thrilling tone, 'is it *your* heart only, do you think, that is now almost breaking?'

After this there was a deep silence, broken only by their own quick breathing. Brooke felt a hand in his. He caught it in a convulsive grasp; and the two hands clung to each other, and throbbed with the vehement pulsations of two hearts that now beat with intense feeling.

'Let me go,' wailed Brooke at last, snatching his hand away. He gasped for breath. He retreated farther into the darkness. Talbot stood motionless and trembling. There was silence again for a long time. It was at last broken by Brooke.

'Come, Talbot,' he said, with feverish rapidity and a wretched assumption of carelessness. 'Let's engage in conversation. What shall we talk about? The weather? Or the crops? Or shall we talk politics? By-the-bye, can't you sing something? I tell you what—it isn't fair. You make me do all the singing. But I don't mind. You're a good listener, at any rate. If you like I'll sing a hymn.' And he began, singing through his nose:

'Oh, a maiden she lived in the south countrie,
And a werry fine maid, my boy, was she,
For her hair was as red as red can be;
So off we go to Marymashee.

'And a jolly young cove fell in love with she.
Says he, "My lass, will you marry me?"
One foot up and t'other foot down,
And away we travel to London town.'

Again there was a sound below. Brooke's song had roused the guard. Talbot gave a wild start.

'They're coming!' she gasped in a tone of horror. 'They're coming—at last. They won't wait!'

'Pooh!' said Brooke, whose voice by this time had regained its old careless ring; and he whined on:

'Cats don't come at half-past eight
Tap-tap-tapping at the garding gate!'

Talbot gave a sigh that sounded like a groan. The sounds below subsided, and all was still once more. So the night passed. Morning came. A man brought up bread and wine; but now there was no thought of eating, even for the sake of saving strength. Neither one spoke, nor did either venture to look at the other.

At length they were summoned outside. Lopez was there, with half-a-dozen men around him. Farther away were the rest of the men, watching the scene. On the right were a dozen men with rifles. Brooke was as cool as usual. Talbot was calm, but deathly pale.

'Señor Brooke,' said Lopez, 'I am a man of but few words, and few need now be said. I have given you a long respite—longer than I said. What is your decision? Will you go with us and show us where the Carlists took the English ladies?'

'Señor Captian,' said Brooke calmly, 'I am quite unable to give you any information about the ladies. I don't see what I can do.'

'Lead us to the place,' said Lopez.

Brooke shook his head.

'I can't say any more,' said he.

'Very well,' said Lopez quietly. 'Then you must die.'

'You can certainly kill me, Señor Captain; but what good will that do?'

'Oh, no particular good,' said Lopez; 'but the law is that spies shall be shot at once, and I merely gave you a chance. You're a bold fellow, and I should like to spare you—that's all.'

'Thanks, Señor Captain. And may I make one request?'

'Name it, señor.'

'This young priest is free, is he not?'

'Certainly.'

'You will suffer him to go without molestation.'

'Certainly.'

'He is young, and a stranger in the country. He doesn't know a word of the language, and is in despair about—about me. Would it be possible for him to procure a guide for part of the way, at least to Vittoria, or some nearer railway station?'

'I will furnish him with one,' said Lopez, 'all the way.'

'Thank you, señor,' said Brooke.

'Señor,' said Lopez, 'it pains me deeply to see you rush on to destruction.'

'Señor Captain,' said Brooke, 'you are a man of honour and generosity. I wish I could do what you ask.'

Lopez shrugged his shoulders. Then he sighed. Then he took a final look at Brooke. After this he motioned to two of his men. These two came forward and led Brooke to a place opposite the file of armed men. One of the men offered to bind his eyes, but Brooke motioned him away.

'I don't want it,' said he.

As he said this, Talbot came up and stood by his side. Lopez walked down toward the file of men and stood at a point on one side, half-way between the condemned and the soldiers.

'Talbot,' said Brooke, in a low voice, 'go away.'

'Brooke,' said Talbot, 'will you not live?'

'What! in dishonour?'

'Oh, my God!' groaned Talbot. 'What shall I do? He will die—and I've killed him!'

'Talbot,' said Brooke, in a husky and unsteady voice, 'go away. You'll make me die two deaths. You are safe. Lopez has promised to send a guide with you to Vittoria.'

'A guide?' said Talbot, in a strange voice.

'Think of me—sometimes,' stammered Brooke.

Talbot turned and looked at him. Brooke saw the look and all that was conveyed in it, and then obstinately shut his eyes.

Lopez now turned to see if the two friends had said their last say. He saw a singular sight. The 'priest' was standing directly in front of Brooke, and facing the file of soldiers. At that moment also Brooke opened his eyes again and saw Talbot in front of him.

He stepped forward and seized her arm.

'Oh, Talbot! oh, Talbot!' he groaned. 'This is worse than death. Why will you torment me?'

Talbot shook him off. Brooke threw a despairing look at the captain, and shrank back. Talbot folded her arms and stood in front of him.

Had she only been able to speak Spanish she would have told them all—how this man had run into danger on her account, how he was now dying through her, how she was resolved to die either for him or with him. She would have told them all that, but that would not have revealed the half of all the eloquent story which stood unfolded in her attitude and in her face.

She stood erect, her arms folded on her breast, facing thus the file of soldiers. Her look, however, was as though she saw them not. Her eyes were turned toward them, yet their gaze was fixed on vacancy. She thus showed her face—looking thus with steadfast eyes—a calm face, serene, tranquil, white as marble, and as motionless. All that Brooke had seen there, which had made him think of the Angel Gabriel, and all that Lopez had seen there which made him think of the Apostle John, was now clearly manifest in that noble and expressive countenance. It was the face of a pure, a lofty, an exalted nature, full of profoundest feeling and matchless self-control—the face of one who was resolved to die, the face of a martyr, the face of one who was standing in full view of Death, who was waiting for his approach, and was undismayed.

As for Brooke, he at last experienced all that he had dreaded. He was utterly overcome. White, ghastly, trembling from head to foot, he stared at Talbot with something like horror in his face, yet he could not move. He stood shuddering, and speechless. At such an astonishing and unexpected spectacle the very soldiers gazed in awe. Hardened as they were, there was

something in Talbot's determined self-sacrifice, and in Brooke's manifest anguish of soul, which overcame them all, and hushed them all alike into wonder and silence. All eyes were fixed on the two who thus stood before the file of soldiers. At length there arose murmurs; strange murmurs, indeed, to come from such men, for they indicated pity and compassion.

Upon Lopez the effect of all this was overwhelming. He had seen it from the beginning. He saw the face of Talbot, the agony of Brooke. At first there was only wonder in his looks, then came profound agitation. His sword dropped from his hand. He turned away. Now, as he thus turned away, had he encountered fierce, cruel, blood-thirsty faces, he might have come back to his first resolve, and recovered from the emotion which was unmanning him; but the faces of his men were full of pity and of wonder. His fierce followers were themselves overcome, and thus the agitation of Lopez was heightened.

'I am a soldier,' he cried; 'I am not a bandit. I am not a cut-throat. It's all very well for us to kill our enemies in battle, but, my lads, to kill people in this way is butchery, and if they want butchers they'll have to get others. I must talk to these men again, especially to this ^{best}.'

With these words Captain Lopez dismissed his men and then turned to Brooke.

'Señor,' said he, 'I have some more questions to ask. I will therefore postpone proceedings until after further examination.'

Talbot understood the actions of Lopez, and comprehended the meaning of his words. There was an immense revulsion of feeling within her—from that preparation for death to this restoration to life; yet so perfect was her self-control that she lost not one wit of her caution, and vigilance, and outward calm. She did not trust herself to look at Brooke. She merely turned away and stood with her eyes fixed on the ground. Brooke stood watching her with a haggard stare. He did not look at Lopez; but as he caught his words he muttered something in reply which was unintelligible to Lopez, and quite incoherent in itself.

The prisoners were now conducted back again to their place of confinement. Here at last, removed from all strange eyes, the fortitude of Talbot, so long sustained, gave way utterly. Under the pressure of so tremendous a reaction her womanly nature reasserted itself. She fell prostrate upon the floor, and lay there, overwhelmed by a vehement passion of tears. As for Brooke, he dared not trust himself to soothe her; he dared not even so much as look at her, but seated himself as far away as possible and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH BROOKE SINGS AND TALKS IN A LIGHT AND
TRIPLING MANNER.

BROOKE and Talbot had thus emerged from the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but that shadow still rested upon them. Their sudden deliverance had left them both alike overwhelmed ; and as they stood apart, not speaking, not even looking at one another, there was a struggle in the mind of each which made it hard indeed for them to regain any kind of self-control. The vision of death which had been before them had disclosed to each the inmost soul of the other, and had led to revelations of feeling that might not have been made under any other circumstances. They had both alike expected death ; they had said to one another their last and truest words ; they had given expression to their most secret and sacred confidences ; they had bidden their most solemn and most tender farewells ; but the moment which had threatened to be the last of life, had passed away leaving them still in the land of the living—leaving them together as before, bound by the new and imperishable tie of a common memory, for neither could forget all that had been said, and felt, and done by the other.

After the events of the morning, Lopez had gone away with the greater part of his followers, leaving behind a guard of about half a dozen, as before. The noise of these movements had aroused the two prisoners, and they had gone to the window to look out, seeking rather to distract their thoughts than to satisfy anything like curiosity. From this window they had watched these proceedings in silence, standing close beside each other, with their eyes turned to the scene outside, but with thoughts wandering elsewhere. At length all had gone except the guard, and the last of the band had been swallowed up by the intervening hills. There was nothing more to be seen outside, or to serve as a pretence for keeping their looks from following their thoughts.

Their eyes met. It was a deep and an eloquent look, full of unuttered meaning, which each turned upon the other ; and each seemed to read in the eyes of the other all the secrets of the heart ; and standing thus, they looked into one another's hearts.

It was Brooke who spoke first.

'I wonder,' said he, in a low, gentle voice—'I wonder, Talbot, if you had that look when you placed yourself in front of me and faced their levelled rifles. If so, Talbot, lad, I don't wonder that the soldiers paused ; for they say that the calm eye of man can tame the wild beast or the fury of the maniac ; and so

your eyes tamed the madness of these fierce ruffians. Was your look then, Talbot, as calm and as firm as it is now ?

'It was fixed,' said Talbot in a gentle voice, 'unalterably. But it was not their rules that I saw ; it seemed then as though I saw the other world.'

A short silence followed, and then Brooke spoke again, in a voice which was very weak and tremulous.

'And you, Talbot, stood before their bullets, offering your life for mine !'

The accents of his voice seemed to quiver with suppressed passion and infinite tenderness.

'It was only a fair exchange,' said Talbot slowly ; and her voice thrilled as she spoke through the heart of Brooke as he went over to her to listen ; 'for you were giving up your own life for me.'

There was silence now for some time, during which their eyes were fastened upon one another. At length Brooke drew a long breath, and turned away. Then he began abruptly to sing one of his droll songs. His voice was faint at first, but grew stronger as he went on:

" 'Billy Taylor was a gay young rover,
Full of mirth and full of glee ;
And his mind he did discover
To a maid of low degree.
Rite follalol-lol-lol-lol-lido,
Rite follalol-lol-lol-lol-lay.' "

'You see,' continued he, 'my way is to sing while I can. There are too many times in life when you can't sing "Billy Taylor." Then you may retire to your corner, and wear sack-cloth and ashes. Such a time is coming, Talbot, lad, when the strain of "Billy Taylor" shall be heard no more. But so long as I can I'll sing :

" 'But this maiden had a parient,
Who was very stern to she.
'Fly, oh, fly, my dearest darter,
From the wiles of your Billee !'
Rite follalol-lol-lol-lol-lido,
Rite follalol-lol-lol-lol-lay.' "

During this little diversion of Brooke's, Talbot said nothing. It was, as he said, his way, and Talbot had grown accustomed to it. A long silence followed, after which Brooke once more addressed her.

'Talbot,' said he, 'we have been acquainted only two or three days, and we have told one another all that is in our hearts. So it seems as if we had been friends for a long time. Yes, Talbot ; if I were to count over all the friends of all my life, I could not find one like you—no, not one. And now, if we both escape and

you go back to your people, how strange it will be never to meet again.'

'Never to meet again!' repeated Talbot; and an expression of sharp and sudden pain flashed over her face. 'You do not mean to say that you will never come to me?'

'Come to you!' repeated Brooke, and he gave that short laugh of his. 'Oh yes—I'll come, of course, and I'll leave my card; and perhaps you'll be "not at home," or perhaps I'll be asked to call again; or perhaps——'

Talbot smiled, and Brooke, catching her eye, smiled also, and stopped abruptly.

Then followed another silence, which, however, unlike most of such periods, was not at all embarrassing.

'Have you noticed,' said Talbot, at length, 'that they have left the same small guard which they left before?'

'Oh yes; but what of that?'

'Don't you think that now, after what has happened, they might be far less strict, and be open to a moderate bribe?'

'Bribe? And why?' asked Brooke.

'Why? why?' repeated Talbot in surprise. 'Why, to escape—to get our freedom.'

'But suppose I don't want my freedom?' said Brooke.

'Not want it? What do you mean? Do you suppose that I may not be strong enough for the journey? Don't be afraid of that. I feel strong enough now for any effort. I'll fly with you—anywhere, Brooke.'

'Fly?' said Brooke; 'fly? What, and take you to your friends? And then what? Why, then—a long good-bye! Talbot, I'm too infernal selfish. I'll tell you a secret. Now that the worst is over—now that there doesn't seem to be any real danger—I'll confess that I enjoy this. I don't want it to end. I feel not only like singing, but like dancing. I want to be always living in a tower, or an old windmill, or anywhere—so long as I can look up and see you, I don't want anything more in the world. And when I look up and see Talbot no more—why then I'll stop singing. For what will life be worth then, when all its sunlight, and bloom, and sweetness, and joy are over, and when they are all past and gone for ever? Life! why, Talbot, lad, I never began to know what life could be till I saw you; and do you ask me now to put an end to our friendship?'

This was what Brooke said, and then he turned off into a song:

"Then this maiden wiped her eyelids
With her pocket-handkerchee;
'Though I grow a yaller spinster
I will stick to my Billee!'
Rite follalol-lol-lol-lol-lido,
Rite follalol-lol-lol-lol-lay."

After this there followed another prolonged silence. Talbot was now the first to speak.

'Brooke,' said she, in her low, soft, tremulous voice, which had died down almost to a whisper, 'we know the secrets of one another's hearts. Oh, Brooke! Brooke! why have we never met before? Oh, Brooke! how strangely we have drifted together! How much we have learned about each other! Is Fate so bitter as to make us drift away, after—after——'

Her voice died away altogether, and she turned her face aside and bowed down her head. Brooke looked at her 'for a moment, and seemed about to take her hand, but he conquered this impulse and resolutely averted his eyes.

'Don't know, I'm sure,' said he at last, with an affectation of airy indifference. 'It would take a man with a head as long as a horse to answer such a question as that. Talbot, lad, you shouldn't plunge so deep into the mysteries of being.'

After this there was another silence, and then Talbot looked up at Brooke with her deep, dark glance, and began to speak in a calm voice, which, however, did not fail to thrill through the heart of Brooke as he listened.

'Brooke,' said she, 'you have your own way. Your way is to conceal a most tender and pitying heart under a rough, or, at least, an indifferent manner—to hide the deepest feeling under a careless smile, and pretend to be most volatile and flippant when you are most serious. You can perform heroic actions as though they were the merest trifles, and lay down your life for a friend with an idle jest. You make nothing of yourself and all of others. You can suffer, and pretend that you enjoy it; and when your heart is breaking, you can force your voice to trol out verses from old songs as though your chief occupation in life were nonsense, and that alone. And this is the man,' continued Talbot in a dreamy tone, like that of one soliloquizing—'this is the man that I found by chance in my distress; the man that responded to my very first appeal by the offer of his life; that went into the jaws of death merely to bring me food; the man that gave up all the world for me—his duty, his love, his life; the man that has no other purpose now but to save me, and who, when his whole frame is quivering with anguish, can smile, and sing, and——'

'Well, what of it?' interrupted Brooke harshly. 'What of it, oh, thou searcher of hearts? And, moreover, as to nonsense, don't you know what the poet says?

"A little nonsense now and then
Is relished by the wisest men."

Moreover, and, yea more, as to smiles and laughter, don't you know what another poet says?—Shakespeare, for instance:

" 'Tis better to laugh than be sighing ;"

or, as Lord Bacon, or Plato, or somebody else says, " Laugh and grow fat." And didn't John Bunyan prefer the House of Mirth to the House of Mourning ?

" John Bunyan was a tinker bold,
His name we all delight in ;
All day he tinkered pots and pans,
All night he stuck to writin'.

" In Bedford streets bold Johnny toiled,
An ordinary tinker ;
In Bedford jail bold Johnny wrote—
Old England's wisest thinker.

" About the Pilgrims Johnny wrote,
Who made the emigration ;
And the Pilgrim Fathers they became
Of the glorious Yankee nation.

" Ad urbem ivit Doodlius cum
Caballo et calone,
Ornavit pluma pileum
Et dixit :—Macaroni !"

Excuse me,' he continued ; 'you don't understand dog-Latin, do you, Talbot ?

'No,' said she with a smile, 'but I understand you, Brooke.'

'Well,' said Brooke, 'but apart from the great question of one another which is just now fixing us on the rack, or on the wheel, or pressing us to any other kind of torment, and considering the great subject of mirthfulness merely in the abstract, do you not see how true it is that it is and must be the salt of life, that it preserves all living men from sourness, and decay, and moral death ? Now, there's Watts, for instance—Isaac Watts, you know, author of that great work, "Watts's Divine Hymns and Spiritual Songs for Infant Minds," or it may have been "Watts's Divine Songs and Spiritual Hymns for Infant Mind." I really don't remember. It's of no consequence. Now, what was Watts ? Why, on my side altogether. Read his works. Consult him in all emergencies. If anything's on your mind, go and find Watts on the mind. It'll do you good. And as the song says :

" Oh, the Reverend Isaac Watts, D.D.,
Was a wonderful boy at rhyme ;
So let every old bachelor fill up his glass
And go in for a glorious time.

Chorus.—Let dogs delight
To bark and bite,
But we'll be jolly, my lads, to-night."

During this last little diversion Brooke never turned his eyes toward Talbot. She was close by his side ; but he stood looking

out of the window, and in that attitude kept rattling on in his most nonsensical way. It was only in this one fact of his careful manner of eluding the grasp, so to speak, of Talbot's eyes, that an observer might discern anything but the most careless gaiety. To Talbot, however, there was something beneath all this, which was very plainly visible; and to her, with her profound insight into Brooke's deeper nature, all this nonsense offered nothing that was repellent; on the contrary, she found it most touching and most sad. It seemed to her like the effort of a strong man to rid himself of an overmastering feeling—a feeling deep within him that struggled forever upward and would not be repressed. It rose up constantly, seeking to break through all bounds; yet still he struggled against it; and still, as he felt himself grow weaker in the conflict, he sought refuge in fresh outbursts of unmeaning words. But amidst it all Talbot saw nothing except the man who had gone forth to die for her, and in all his words heard nothing except the utterance of that which proved the very intensity of his feelings.

'Oh yes,' continued Brooke, 'there are lots of authorities to be quoted in favour of mirthfulness. I've already mentioned Bunyan and Watts. I'll give you all the rest of the old divines.

"Oh, Baxter is the boy for me,
So full of merriment and glee;
And when I want a funny man,
I turn to any old Puritan:—
A Puritan,
A funny man,
I read the works of a Puritan!

"Among the Puritan divines
Old Cotton Mather brightest shines,
And he could be a funny man,
Because he was a Puritan:—
A Puritan,
A funny man,
Old Mather was a Puritan!

"The old Blue-Laws, of all the best,
Old Calvin made in solemn jest;
For fun he never could tolerate,
Unless established by the State:—
A Puritan,
A funny man,
John Calvin was a Puritan!"

This eccentric song Brooke droned out in nasal tones and with a lachrymose whine to the strangest tune that ever was heard. At its close he heaved a sigh, and said:

'Well, it's dry work singing hymns all by myself, and you won't even "jine" in the choruses, and so—I'll stop the machine.'

Saying this, he turned away and went to the opposite side of the small loft, where he sat down with his head against the wall.

'Does any lady or gentleman present object to smoking?' said he after a brief pause, as he drew forth his pipe and smoking materials. 'Because I propose to take a smoke, and I should like to know just out of curiosity.'

To this Talbot made no reply, but sat down opposite Brooke, in the same attitude, and watched him as he smoked, which he proceeded to do without any further delay.

'You don't smoke, I believe, sir,' said he with all gravity.

Talbot said nothing.

'Well,' said Brooke, 'I wouldn't advise you to begin;' and with that he went on puffing away.

Brooke at last finished his smoke, after which he put his pipe in his pocket, and then, throwing his head back, sat with his eyes obstinately fixed on the ceiling. Talbot remained in the same attitude, without moving. She had kept her eyes all this time fixed on Brooke, and knew that he was avoiding her glance. All the same, however, she continued watching him, and was waiting patiently till she should catch his eye. But Brooke, as though aware of her purpose, avoided her, and still looked away. Thus these two sat in utter silence for a long time. It was Talbot who first broke the silence.

'Brooke,' said she in a soft, low voice, which sounded like a sigh.

'Well, Talbot,' said Brooke in a voice which was strangely altered from the somewhat hard tones of forced gaiety in which he had last been speaking.

'Brooke,' said Talbot, 'I am miserable.'

Brooke was silent for a time. He made a movement, then checked himself, and then said:

'Are you? Odd, too, isn't it?'

'I am miserable,' said Talbot again; 'and it is strange, for your life has been saved, and we are out of immediate danger. Yet I am now more miserable than I was last night when your life was in danger. Can you tell me why it is so, Brooke?'

Again Brooke made a movement, which he checked, as before, by a strong impulse.

'Give it up,' said he shortly.

'I know,' said Talbot. 'I'll tell you. It was this,' and her voice dropped as she spoke to a lower tone. 'Last night I had made up my mind to die for you, Brooke.'

Brooke drew a long breath. For an instant his eyes lowered. They caught the gaze which Talbot had fixed on him—deep, intense, unfathomable. It was but for a moment, and then it was as though he made a violent effort, and tore them away. One of his hands caught at the other, and held it in a tight grip.

'Too much Talbot in that,' he said at length in a harsh voice. 'If you go on dying for people, what'll become of you ?'

'And now,' continued Talbot in a dreamy way—'now, when suspense and danger seem over, I am miserable—simply miserable, Brooke. Why should my mind have such strange alternations, feelings so contradictory, so unreasonable? I ought to be happy—why am I not?'

'Now,' said Brooke, in the same harsh tone as before, 'you're beginning to talk metaphysics, and I'm all at sea there.'

Talbot was silent. Brooke began to sing:

How doth the little busy bee
Improve the shining hour,
But I prefer
The caterpil lar
That feeds on the self-same flower.
The bee he slaves for all his life;
Not so the other one;
For he soars to the sky,
A butterfly,
Ere half his days are done.'

Silence now followed for a very long time. It was at length broken by Brooke.

'Talbot,' said he in a soft, low voice.

'Well, Brooke,' said Talbot.

'Will you be silent if I say something?'

'Yes, Brooke.'

'Not speak a word?'

'No, Brooke.'

'Not move an inch?'

'No, Brooke.'

'Well,' said Brooke, 'on second thoughts, I think I won't say it.'

Talbot said nothing. Brooke sat looking away, as usual, but now, at last, his eyes, which had so long avoided hers, sank down till they met her gaze. They rested there, and these two sat in silence, regarding one another with a strange, sad look of longing, as though there was between them a barrier over which they dared not pass. And that barrier arose there, invisible yet impassable—the pledge of honour and fidelity already given by each to another, at the thought of which they had now to crush down the surging passions within.

'Talbot,' said Brooke once more.

'Well, Brooke,' was the answer.

'Oh, Talbot! Talbot! Do you know what I wish to say?'

'Yes, Brooke,' said Talbot. 'I know it, I know it—all.'

'Well, I will say it,' said Brooke, 'for I cannot keep it. Oh, Talbot! it is this—it is part of my Puritan education, perhaps. Oh, Talbot!—and his eyes rested on hers with a devouring gaze,

and his voice trembled and died out into almost inaudible tones — 'oh, Talbot, my younger brother Talbot! Very pleasant hast thou been unto me. Thy love to me is wonderful — passing the love of women?'

Talbot was true to her promise. She did not move an inch and she did not speak a word. But her eyes were fixed upon his; and in those eyes Brooke saw once again what he had seen before — the look of a love that had already shown itself stronger than life.

* * * * *

It was evening.

Suddenly there arose a noise outside. Brooke started up and went to the window, where he stood looking out. It was Lopez, with all his followers, who were returning.

Brooke, in his usual fashion, sang:

'Oh, little Jack he climbed so high,
Up the beanstalk into the sky,
And there he saw an ogre grim
A comin' to make mince-meat of him.
Singing fo-ho-fo-fun —
I smell the blood of an Englishman!'

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW MR. ASHBY MEETS WITH A GREAT SURPRISE AND A
VERY GREAT CONSOLATION.

ASHBY was alone in his chamber. His room opened from the lower hall, and was directly beneath that in which Harry was confined. It was of the same dimensions in all save height, in which respect it was much inferior. The room had also a gloomier character, for the high stone-walls, as they rose and arched overhead, had the aspect of some cathedral crypt or burial-place. The windows here were narrow slits, as above, through which the different court-yards might be seen. The floor was of stone, and at one end there was a huge fireplace, very similar to the others already mentioned, though not so high.

It had been a long, long day for Ashby. Evening came, and found him weary and worn out with *ennui*. Without any occupation for his energies, his mind preyed upon itself, and there certainly was sufficient occupation for his fancy. His mind was in a whirl, and speedily became a prey to every variety of conflicting feeling. He remembered Katie's bright smile, and also the dark glance of Dolores. He was jealous of the smiles which Katie had so lavishly bestowed on Harry. He was offended with her for being so gay under such circumstances. But, in his

loneliness there were other feelings which were stronger than even this resentment and jealousy. There were certain strange and indefinable longings after some society; and the society which now seemed most desirable was the gentle presence of Dolores. Her last looks remained deeply impressed upon his memory; her last deep, earnest glance had sunk into his soul. He could not throw aside this recollection. Dolores was in all his thoughts, though he had tried to thrust her aside.

He found himself continually comparing these two. Would Katie be so glad at seeing him again as Dolores had been at meeting him? Would Katie take so much trouble for the sake of speaking to him? On the other hand, would Dolores be so gay, so happy, and so merry when torn from him? and would Dolores look upon him in his loneliness with such a smile of indifference and light-hearted mirth? Never! Dolores had a deeper nature. In the glance of Dolores her inmost soul had been revealed. At its recollection his nerves thrilled, his heart throbbed faster. He longed to hear her voice again. And thus, as the hours passed, the image of Katie faded away, and that of Dolores grew more strongly defined; the image of Dolores as she had last appeared to him—pale, sad, anxious, earnest, her eyes fixed upon him with deep, intense melancholy and profound pity.

‘Afar away from thee,
Thy pale face haunts me yet;
Deep yearns my heart for thee,
Thy last sad look and word unable to forget.’

These words occurred to him, and he murmured them to himself. It was to Dolores that he applied them, and naturally too; for how ridiculously inapplicable to Katie would they be! All else was now forgotten except Dolores. He felt a longing after her that was like homesickness. The past all came back. He recalled her as she had been when he first met her at Valencia. A thousand little incidents in his life there, which had been for a time forgotten, now revived in his memory. He had been for months at their house and had been nursed through a long illness. He had been loaded with kindness and affection. The aged mother had been his nurse during his illness, and Dolores had been his companion during his convalescence. He had left them, expecting soon to return. Circumstances, however, had arisen which kept him away, and he had forgotten her. Now, however, a stronger feeling had arisen for her, as Dolores had appeared in more than her olden beauty, with the additional charm of a strange, pathetic grace, and a wistful look in her dark eyes that seemed to speak of something more than ordinary friendship. She had spoken of the days at Valencia; she had reproached him for forgetting. She herself had not forgotten those days—the days in which they used to talk and walk and sing together.

As there was nothing to divert his mind from these thoughts, Ashby gave himself up to them, and thus became more helpless against them. It was in such a mood as this that he lay upon his rude couch, unable to sleep, and wondering what was to be the end of his present adventure. Should he ever see her again? Was she here now, or had they let her go? The thought that she might possibly have been set free, that she might now be far away, was too distressing to be entertained. If so, then his prison seemed doubly dark. If so, then what could he do? Even if he should become free, what was he to do? Upon one thing he was resolved, and that was to seek after her until he might find her. And Katie? Well, the fact is, Katie was left out of consideration.

Hours had passed. Ashby could not sleep. His mind was as active as ever, and still, as ever, his thoughts all gathered about Dolores.

Suddenly, in the very midst of these thick-teeming fancies, his attention was arrested by a strange sound.

It was only a slight rustle, scarce audible, yet still he heard it, and under such circumstances it seemed most mysterious. In an instant he was all attention. He lay motionless, yet listened with intense watchfulness, peering at the same time into the dark room, where the moonlight struggled through the low, narrow windows.

After a little while he thought that he heard the sound again. He listened, without motion.

Then there came a different sound. It was a low whisper—a whisper which, however, penetrated to his very soul:

‘Assebi!’

Was there any other in all the world who would pronounce his name in that way? It was the well-known, well-remembered, and dearly loved name as it had been pronounced by Dolores in the old days at Valencia. Coming thus to him at such a time, it seemed too good to be true. He was afraid that he had been deceived by his own fancy; he feared to move, lest he might dispel this sweet vision. Yet he hoped that he might not be mistaken; and in this hope, scarce expecting an answer, he said, in a gentle whisper:

‘Dolores!’

‘I am here!’ said a soft voice.

At this Ashby’s heart beat wildly, and a thrill of rapture rushed through every nerve and fibre of his being. He sprang up and peered through the gloom, and moved forward in the direction from which the voice seemed to have come. At this moment he did not stop to consider how Dolores could have got there. It was enough that she really was there, and all other feelings were lost in his deep joy.

'Dolores,' he said, 'where are you? I don't see you.'

Through the room a figure now advanced across the moonbeams. He saw the figure. In another instant he had caught Dolores in his arms, and held her strained close to his wildly throbbing heart. But Dolores struggled away.

'Oh no!' she said, in a tone of distress, speaking in her sweet Spanish—'oh no, Señor Assebi. This is cruel—when I have risked so much for you!'

'Forgive me, dearest Dolores,' said Ashby; 'but you have come to me like an angel from heaven in my darkest hour. And I have thought of you, and of you only, ever since you left me at Burgos. I wandered all through the streets there to find you. I have been in despair at losing you. I have been wondering whether I should ever see you again—and now, dearest, sweetest Dolores, I have you again!'

All this was rapidly uttered in a resistless torrent of words, in which all his long pent-up feelings flowed forth.

Dolores began to sob.

'I didn't think this,' she said, 'or I should have been afraid to come. Señor, you are false to your English bride.'

'English bride!' cried Ashby scornfully. 'What is she? A doll! I never wish to see her again. My fancy for her was a whim—a passing whim! *You*, Dolores—*you* are the only one that I love! I love *you*! I love *you*, I adore you!—my own—'

'Señor,' cried Dolores, tearing away her hands, which Ashby had seized in his, 'I will instantly leave you if you are so dishonourable. All this is insult to me—yes, to me. Oh, señor, you will break my heart!'

As Dolores said this, sobs burst from her. She glided away into the gloom, still sobbing. Ashby gave way utterly.

'Dolores,' he cried, in a tone of entreaty—'Dolores, forgive me! I will never offend again—never—never! Oh, forgive me! Come back, Dolores! Oh, do not leave me, Dolores!'

At this Dolores relented, and Ashby saw her approaching him again. He advanced toward her.

'Be calm,' she said; 'speak low; we are in danger.'

'But how did you get here?' asked Ashby.

'I will tell you another time. It is a secret passage.'

'A secret passage?'

'Yes. I have come to tell you that I can save you. You may escape.'

'Escape?'

'Yes. I know the way out.'

'How does that happen?'

'Oh, I have been here before.'

'You?—here?'

'Yes. When I was a child I was here. My father lived here. He had a plantation. But enough ; I know the way out.'

'But haven't you run too much risk in coming here ?'

'I have run a risk,' said Dolores slowly, 'but not—too—much.'

'A risk ?'

'Yes. I went into the wrong room. A man was asleep there. I went to him and touched him, and whispered in his ear your name.'

'Dolores !'

'Hush ! be calm, señor. Remember your promise.'

'Who was the man ?'

'I could not see him. He pursued me, but I escaped.'

'But you !—how did you get here ?'

'By a secret passage, as I said.'

'In what part of the castle are you ?'

'Oh, in the story above.'

'Do they treat you well ?' asked Ashby, in a tone of tender solicitude.

'I have nothing to complain of.'

'Do you feel lonely ? I wonder if you have felt as I have ?'

Dolores sighed.

'Sometimes,' she said, 'I have felt lonely.'

'And you have come here to save me ?'

'Yes—why not ?'

'But you are risking much—perhaps your life ?'

It all burst forth now.

'I don't care,' said Dolores impetuously, 'if I can save—you !'

Ashby made no reply. He took the little hand of Dolores gently and tenderly, without any resistance on her part, and held it in silence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW MR. ASHBY AND MISS DOLORES GARCIA CARRY ON A
VERY INTERESTING CONVERSATION.

ASHBY stood thus, holding the little hand of Dolores, and was overcome by the strongest emotions. He was in a very trying position. Her presence filled him with joy, yet she would not allow him to express that joy. Being bound to another, he was forced by Dolores to respect that bond. And yet, what must her feelings be toward him, since she had come here to see him, venturing so far and risking so much ? Who else in the world would do this for him ? Would Katie ? The idea was too absurd. Katie was a mere butterfly ; but Dolores, with her intense nature, her passionate self-devotion, was formed out of that stuff from which the heroine is made. Katie could lose all she loved best,

and still go on smiling and smiling ; but Dolores could lay down her life for her friend. (Such were the sentiments of Ashby on this occasion, and need not be considered as by any means a fair estimate of the real character of the young lady in question. Katie has yet to speak for herself.)

So Ashby felt himself debarred from making any strong demonstration of feeling, either by word or act. He was afraid that Dolores might resent it. She might even fly from him as mysteriously as she had come. He was bound, therefore, to set a watch upon himself, and repress his feelings most strongly. It seemed to him a great concession on her part that she permitted him even to hold her hand. This was of itself most sweet, even if he could say nothing of those thoughts that were swelling within him.

'How did you manage to hide yourself so at Burgos?' he asked after a long silence.

'I did not hide,' said Dolores. 'I went to that house where my friends were ; and on the following morning they took me to an hotel where they said there was an English family. These were the Russells, and they consented to let me travel with them as far as I was going. Your English maiden is very beautiful, señor.'

Dolores spoke these last words in a tone full of pathos.

'She is a pink-and-white doll,' said Ashby sharply. 'Tell me about yourself, Dolores. Do you know?'—and he bent down low over her—'do you know how I tried to see you? I was up at four, and from that until ten I paced the streets in all directions, hoping to get a glimpse of you. Did you know that I was looking for you? Then at last I saw you with that beast of a tailor, and I was in despair.'

'What! could you not join their party? I wondered why you did not come to speak to—to me,' said Dolores, 'and I felt hurt—because I thought I might never see you again.'

'Dolores,' said Ashby, taking her hand in both of his, and drawing nearer to her, 'I swear that at that time I'd have given my right arm to speak to you. But that devil of a tailor is my bitter enemy ; and you saw the quarrel we had in the railway station at Madrid.'

'Then you did not purposely—avoid me?' said Dolores, in a faltering voice.

'Oh, Dolores!' said Ashby in a reproachful tone

He tried to draw her nearer, but Dolores would not allow it.

'I thought that I should like to say good-bye, and it seemed sad to have you appear to avoid me.'

'By heavens, Dolores!' cried Ashby, 'I had made up my mind to leave the train and follow you to Pampeluna.'

Dolores sighed.

'You could not have left your English maiden,' said she.

'I could—I would!' cried Ashby. 'By heavens, I would! She is nothing to me—nothing better than a kitten. The moment you came, I understood all my feeling for her. It was nothing. Beside you, she sinks into utter insignificance. You, Dolores, are everything to me. I tell you, you are infinitely dearer to me than that——'

'Hush, señor,' said Dolores; 'I will not—I will—will—will not listen to one single, single word of this.'

'But, oh, dearest, sweetest Dolores, will you not let me tell you how I love you?' said Ashby, drawing her closer to him.

Dolores shrank away.

'Oh no—no, no!' she said. 'I will not listen—never—never never!'

'I tell you, Dolores,' continued Ashby, 'since I have seen you I have discovered that all the world and everything in it isn't worth a straw to me unless I have you. I swear to you that when you left me at Burgos all the light of life went out, and all the joy and sweetness of life left me. I'd rather stand here in this prison with you than be a king outside without you. And I'm glad that these devils of Carlists have captured us.'

As Ashby spoke these words in a low, fervid, excited whisper, he held Dolores tight in his arms, pressed to his quick-throbbing heart; nor could she draw away from him, in spite of her shrinking back. In fact, the poor little thing did not seem to have the will to get away from him, for the end of it was that her head fell down helplessly on his breast, and she began to cry:

'I—think—it's—cruel,' she sobbed, 'cruel in you!'

Ashby pressed her more closely to his heart in the same 'cruel' manner, and kissed away her tears.

'You're not kind to me at all,' sighed Dolores.

To this observation Ashby made no reply, thinking, perhaps, that at that moment words were of no particular use.

'It's very cruel,' repeated Dolores, 'and I did not think you would be so unkind——'

To this Ashby's answer was, as before, by acts that were more eloquent than words.

'Dolores,' said he, as soon as he was able to express himself coherently, 'if you had not come, I really think I should have killed myself.'

'Did you really feel so badly?' asked Dolores in a tender voice.

'My heart ached,' said Ashby; 'it ached for the sight of you. Do you know what heartache is, darling? Do you know what it is to hunger, and thirst, and long, and yearn after some one?'

Dolores sighed. She said nothing, but her head rested more closely on Ashby's breast, and one little hand stole timidly up and was laid lightly on his shoulder.

'Do you know anything about such feelings, Dolores?' persisted Ashby.

said she.

'All,' said Dolores, in a scarce audible whisper, 'all—all—all! But tell me,' said she, looking up as though trying to see his face in the gloom, 'who was it?'

'Who was it? What a question! You! you, darling! you. Dolores!'

'Not the English maiden?' she asked.

'She!' said Ashby contemptuously; 'she is a doll—a butterfly—a kitten! She is nothing—a poor creature with no brains and no heart! Even her beauty is mere prettiness. There is no soul in her face, no lightning in her glance.'

'And who has soul in her face and lightning in her glance?' asked Dolores shyly.

'Who? You! you, my darling, dark-eyed Dolores! you, with your deep, unfathomable, glowing, soul-lit eyes, that pierce to my inmost heart, and make me thrill at the recollection.'

'And won't you say that all again?' said Dolores; 'and won't you say that about the English maid? I love to hear you call her names.'

Dolores said this with the innocence and frank simplicity of a child.

'She is a baby!' said Ashby; 'the English maiden—a mere baby! She can only smile, and smile, and be silly. Her only desire is to find some one who will pet her. She can only live in the sunshine. She is a butterfly! She has no heart, no soul! She is a doll to be looked at, but she can give no return. She is a kitten that thinks of nothing but play. But as for me, I give all my heart and all my love to a girl I know, who is no mere fair-weather friend, but one who has clung to me when others were false, who has come to me in my darkness and my despair, so that my dungeon has become a heaven, and this dark night is the brightest time of my life. And this girl—this, my Spanish girl, is my idol and my deity. I adore her, for I know that she stands ready to give up all for my sake, and to lay down her very life for me. Never—never in all my life have I known anything like the deep, intense, vehement, craving, yearning, devouring love that I feel for her. It even makes me smile to think how feeble and contemptible other feelings have been in comparison with this. I want no other occupation than to spend all my hours recalling all that my darling love has ever said—in recalling the days at Valencia, before I knew she was so dear, and the highest bliss of life I have now. I could be willing to die, and could even die gladly, my darling, darling Dolores, if I could die with your hand in mine.'

Ashby was going on farther in this pleasing strain, when suddenly, and without a moment's warning, Dolores gave a spring and vanished.

Ashby stood confounded. Then he stared all around. Then he called after her:

'Dolores ! Dolores ! Don't leave me !

A voice came back through the gloom :

'H-s-s-s-h ! I must not stay any longer.'

'But shall I never see you again ?

'Certainly ; I will come soon, and show you the passage-way.'

'Where are you ?

'Never mind—good-night !

'Oh, Dolores, wait—one word more.'

'Be quick !' said Dolores, and her voice now sounded nearer.

'You will see me again ?' said Ashby, in tones of entreaty.

'You will not fly and leave me all alone ! You will not leave me in this way ? I may be taken away from this room, Dolores, or you may be taken to another room ; and then how can you get to me ? Show me how you came here. You might do that much for me. Only think what dangers there are.'

Dolores paused a moment.

'Well,' said she, 'only promise one thing.'

'What ?

'That you will not try to visit me. That would be dangerous. Others are with me.'

'I will not ; I promise—except, of course, in cases of the greatest necessity.'

'If you do,' said Dolores, 'I shall think that you have not come for me ; I shall think it is for the English maiden. And now, come ; I will show you the way.'

Once more Dolores appeared through the gloom.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH 'HIS MAJESTY' FALLS IN LOVE.

MRS. RUSSELL'S position was a very peculiar and a very trying one. From the remarks of 'his Majesty' she had reason to believe that her beloved, yet unfortunate, husband had been found guilty of treason against that august monarch, and had been executed. At the same time, 'his Most Sacred Majesty' had evinced what appeared to be a devoted attachment to her humble self. Now, what was a high-toned woman to do under such circumstances ? Mourn over the departed one ? Most certainly ; that she would ever do. But what about 'his Majesty' and the royal attentions ? Should she turn a deaf ear to that too, too eloquent tongue, dash down the crown of Spain, and busy herself in unavailing regrets for the lost one ? Before doing so it would be well to pause.

And then there were other considerations. It was not the man who must be considered, but the King. It was not her own

feelings which she must regard, but the well-being of Spain, the good of Europe, and the interests of humanity. Would it not be better that the throne of Spain should be filled by a virtuous Englishwoman than by some frivolous Continental princess? Would it not be better that the Queen of Spain should emulate the domestic graces of a Victoria than the corrupt follies of an Isabella? Should she now, out of selfish private grief, deprive Spain of such an inestimable boon? Would Spain forgive her? Would England? Nay, would the world? Could she forgive herself?

'Nay, nay,' she said to herself, 'this is not a time for weakness. My heart must ever lie entombed in the grave of my dear lost Johnny; yet State reasons compel me to bestow my hand. I cannot resist the cry of stricken Spain. Yes, thou royal wooer! take my hand—it is thine; and my only sorrow is that I cannot yet give thee all this stricken heart. Yet patience, fond one; it may all be thine in time—all—all.'

Katie was surprised to observe an unwonted dignity suddenly come over Mrs. Russell. She informed that young person that she needn't call her 'Auntie' now, but 'Madame,' or 'Señora,' and proceeded to drop mysterious hints, from which Katie's quick wit soon gathered the whole of the facts of the case.

Katie exulted so in this discovery that she felt happier than ever in her life before, and her only trouble was that she had no one to whom she might tell this. However, she did the best she could, and set herself to the task of confirming Mrs. Russell in her views and intentions; in which she was so successful that the latter began to imagine herself as almost already on the throne; and when Katie once or twice accidentally addressed her as 'your Majesty,' the good lady did not check her.

Another visit from 'his Majesty' found Mrs. Russell like ripe fruit ready to be gathered. On this occasion, as before, the august monarch came alone. He was in high good-humour, and smelt strongly of whisky. He began, in a strain of gallantry, complimenting the ladies in general on their numerous charms.

'Yez oughtn't to be kept here undher lock an' kay,' said 'his Majesty,' 'an' mesilf 'ud be the proud man to let yez out, ivery one av yez, but thin how do I know that I'd iver see yez agin? I must kape yez till me fate's decoided. I don't know yet that ye'd be willin' to come to terrums; an' so ye're loike O'Rafferty in the song:

"Oh, a fine pair av handcuffs he wore,
That the sheriff had natelly adjusted,
Because that official persayved
That O'Rafferty couldn't be trusted."

'Ah, sire,' said Mrs. Russell, with a sigh, 'your Royal Majesty holds us by stronger bonds than bolts and bars.'

'Be jabbers!' exclaimed 'his Majesty,' 'that's good! that's nate! that's illigant! I couldn't bate that mesilf, an' I hope that all the ladies present will join in that sintimint.'

As he spoke, 'his Majesty' looked hard at Katie, but that young lady did not catch the royal eye.

'The throne av Spain,' continued 'his Majesty,' 'an' the crown an' sceptre av Spain, an' all the r'y'l regalia, an' all the moight an' majesty an' magnificence av its pomp and power—be jabbers! they're all goin' a beggin' in this room; an' there's one hero that's only got to wink, an' it's hers, every bit av it.'

Mrs. Russell here made desperate efforts to catch the royal eye, but to no purpose, for that eye was fixed on Katie.

'Yis,' continued 'his Majesty,' 'an' afore to-morrow noon it 'ud be all hers, any time at all—crown an' sceptre an' all—an' the marriage ceremony cud come off in the mornin', loike Tim :

"' Oh, married was Tim at the dawn av day ;
His bride was a stout owld widdy ;
She owned a horse, an' she owned a shay,
An' her maiden name was Biddy."

The habits of this illustrious being were singular, and his tendency to make odd quotations, which were not always particularly relevant, was not the least surprising of his ways. In this last quotation Mrs. Russell found several objectionable expressions : but on the whole the idea was a flattering one, for the subject of the narrative was represented as 'marrying a widow;' and this little circumstance was taken as a fresh proof of 'his Majesty's' devotion.

'Yez mustn't think,' continued 'his Majesty,' 'that there's any lack av our r'y'l attintion to yez because yez haven't got much to brag av in the way av food; begorra! I'm in the same box mesilf, an' it isn't much at all at all I can get here except mutton, an' it's mesilf that 'ud give all the mutton in Spain for a bit av a pratie. Howandiver, I hope to get some fish by to-morrow mornin'. If we could only get a taste av a few praties there'd be nothin' wantin'; for :

"' It's little I axes,
An' little I wish ;
If others want luxuries, let them ;
For praties and fish,
Make an illigant dish,
If ye only have whisky to wet them."

These and other cheerful remarks of a general nature were addressed by 'his Majesty' to the company at large. It is

true, the royal eye was fixed exclusively on Katie, and therefore the royal remarks were probably so many efforts to do the agreeable to her. But that young lady persistently evaded the royal eye; and as Dolores was disregarded altogether, it was natural enough that Mrs. Russell should appropriate all the royal remarks and make the necessary replies.

'Ah, sire! your "royal Majesty" is so very funny! Are all the crowned heads thus?'

'All iv thim—ivery mother's son av thim. An' they're an illigant lot. But moind this—it's mesilf that bates the whole lot, out-an'-out. Ye know, I'm not only King av Spain, but heir to the crown av France.'

'Is it possible?' said Mrs. Russell.

'Divil a loie I'm tellin',' said 'his Majesty.' 'It's thrue, so it is. I'm nixt av kin to Henri Cinq—that's Chambord, ye know. The Count av Paris is Orleans, not Bourbon. I'm Bourbon, begorra! An' whin Chambord doies, an' the nixt revolution takes place in France, I'll march on Paris an' give pance to that unhappy counthry. An', be jabers! I'll take me wife wid me, an' we'll live in Paris, an' I'll get her the most illigant dhresses, an' coort coschumes, an' bonnets, an' boots, an' laces, an' gims, an' jools that iver any woman wore. The Quane av Spain 'll be the Quane av France too; an' what's more, she'll be the quane of beauty an' fashion, an' the ex-Empress Eugénie 'll be nowhere. She'll be forgotten.'

It was thus that the royal wooer tried to dazzle Katie's imagination; but whatever the effect on her may have been, it is certain that Mrs. Russell experienced the full effect of the dazzling visions which those words were intended to call up.

'An' now,' said 'his Majesty,' starting up, 'we must be off. We've got business. But we hope to see yez soon, an' have it all arranged. Whisper, darlint'—and he bent down his royal head close to Mrs. Russell's tingling ear—'whisper, jool: I'm wantin' to have a discourse wid ye—somethin' important—I must see ye alone. It's ill convaynient just now, an' I don't want to be overheard. I'll wait till the gyerruls are aslape, an' I'll luk in. Ye'll moind, will ye? This night, jool.'

'Ah, sire—ah, "your Majesty,"' sighed Mrs. Russell, 'I'm ready—why not now?'

'Whis-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-sht! shure ye'll spoil all, so ye will. Only moind—to-noight!'

'Ah, sire, I'll never forget—never—never!'

'Thin moind to be on the luk-out,' said 'his Majesty;' and with these remarkable words he retreated, leaving Mrs. Russell in a state of mind which, as the novelists say, 'can better be imagined than described.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW HARRY PAYS ANOTHER VISIT, AND MEETS WITH A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

HARRY's loneliness was by no means alleviated at finding that Katie was so near. It was, indeed, rather aggravated, for to our light-hearted friend it seemed intolerable that Katie should be so near and yet so far. She was separated from him by only a few paces, and yet he was compelled to keep away from her. To run the risk of discovery was not to be thought of. By day it was necessary to put up with his solitude as best he might. He was sufficiently wary not to forget himself, and he did not lose sight of the probability that he was watched. The discovery of that passage-way made it seem not unlikely that this Castle in Spain was all honeycombed with other passages; that its ponderous walls were all a sham; that these massive stones served merely as a blind to conceal innumerable hiding-places and secret chambers. He was sure now that these walls had ears, and perhaps eyes also; and therefore he determined to do nothing which could lead to the discovery of his secret.

At length evening came, and then Harry began to breathe freely. He was fully resolved on paying another visit to Katie at the earliest possible moment. He knew that she would be expecting him. She would not be asleep this time. There were many things which he wished to say, and, above all, he wished to persuade her to venture into the passage-way herself, at some favourable opportunity, so that they might see one another more frequently.

It was about nine o'clock when Harry entered the passage-way. It was quite dark, the room being illuminated in part, as before, by the struggling moonbeams. He went along the passage-way and came to the end at the other chimney. There he paused, and waited, and watched. Gradually he became aware of some one beneath. He gave a low whisper: 'Katie!' A low whisper was returned: 'Harry!'

Upon this he descended softly and noiselessly. Katie herself was there. She had been expecting him.

'They are all asleep,' she said. 'I thought I'd just come here to see if you were coming.'

'You little pet! You knew I'd come.'

'I thought you might, you know.'

'This day has been so horribly long, Katie; I thought it would never end. See here—can't we manage to run away? I wish I could find some way out. But you're chilly. This air is damp, and there is a bad draught down the chimney. Come into the corner of the room.'

'But, oh, do be very, very cautious!' said Katie.

Holding her hand, Harry went stealthily into the room, and drew her with him as quietly as possible, till they reached a corner of the room on the right of the fireplace. This corner was all shrouded in gloom, so that if the sleepers had awakened they could have seen nothing. Here the two found themselves quite secure for the time being; and as all the room was perfectly silent, they were not afraid to resume their stealthy whispers.

'Have you been lonely to day, Katie?' asked Harry in a tender voice.

'Oh, a little.'

'A little?' repeated he, in a reproachful tone.

'But there's been such an awful lot of fun,' said Katie; 'I've been almost bursting to tell some one—that's you, you know.'

'Fun?' said Harry wonderingly; 'what fun?'

'Oh, that absurd old Paddy King, Don Carlos, as he calls himself—only he's no more a king than I am. Don't you think he's some strolling Irish vagabond adventurer?'

'Irish vagabond? I don't know,' said Harry. Now Harry had only heard 'his Majesty' speak in Spanish, and therefore did not see the point at all.

'Well, for my part, I'm sure he's an Irishman,' said Katie.

'Mrs. Russell says that he learned some English from an Irish priest; but that wouldn't account for his queer songs.'

'Songs?'

'Oh, he's utterly ridiculous! Who or what he really is I cannot imagine. And, do you know, the best fun of all is—he's in love with me.'

'In love with you?' Harry cried, recoiling as he said it.

'Yes, of course—why not?' said Katie.

'The infernal cad!' cried Harry.

'Oh, what naughty language!' said Katie. 'Oh!'

'D—n him!' cried Harry furiously. 'What does the fellow mean?'

'I declare I won't listen to such shocking language,' said Katie. 'Now stop!'

'Well—but what does the scoundrel mean?' repeated Harry in jealous wrath.

'Well, he means to try—to marry me.'

'Marry—you?'

'Oh yes; and he says he'll make me Queen of Spain—and he says he has a claim to the crown of France also, which he promises to share with me.'

'Good heavens!' said Harry, in utter consternation; for Harry had not yet done more than vaguely suspect that 'his Majesty' might be any other than what he claimed to be, and this design of his upon Katie seemed now a peril of no common magnitude.

'Why, Katie,' he added, after a pause, 'a royal personage can't marry a private person like you. It's illegal, you know.'

'Oh, but the fun of it is he's only a common Irishman, and he drinks whisky, and has an awful brogue. Oh, it's such fun to listen to him! But the greatest fun of all is, auntie believes in him. She thinks he is really Don Carlos; and, best of all, she thinks he is making love to her, and proposing to her.'

'To her! Why, she has a husband already.'

'Oh, but she thinks he has been killed.'

'Killed? Good heavens! Is that really so? Poor old Russell! Oh, heavens! The villains! They'd do it, too.'

And Harry thought of the bonds and the search after them. It seemed to him not at all unlikely that they had killed Russell so as to get at these, or perhaps to punish him for not giving them up. Horror now quite overwhelmed him. He felt even shocked at Katie's levity.

'But Mrs. Russell,' he said; 'how does she bear this horrible calamity?'

'Bear it?' said Katie; 'why, she wants to be Queen of Spain, and France too!'

'What, when her husband lies murdered close by? Oh, heavens!—oh, good heavens!'

'Well, do you know, it does seem very odd indeed.'

'But you, Katie—how can you talk of such horrors in such a way? What will be the fate of the rest of us, after this?'

'Why, you poor foolish boy, you needn't scold and go on so. I don't believe he's dead any more than you are. I believe that "his Majesty" only said it in fun. In fact, he never did actually say so.'

Harry sighed a sigh of perplexity.

'But, you know,' continued Katie, 'Mrs. Russell went and got it into her poor old head. Oh, she's very, very imaginative, poor dear old auntie, and she would have it so. And she thinks that all the speeches which "His Majesty" makes at me are intended for her.'

'The wretched creature!' said Harry; 'to speculate upon her husband's death, and think of such a thing as marriage.'

'Oh, but she says that it is not love that makes her think of it, but State policy.'

'State fiddlesticks!'

'She says that Mary Queen of Scots married Bothwell after her husband's murder, from motives of State policy.'

'Oh, good heavens!' said Harry, whose sense of honour and loyalty and affection, and even of common decency, was utterly outraged at such a revelation; 'and she always seemed such a quiet, good, well-meaning sort of a person.'

'But she means well now,' said Katie. 'She says her marriage is to be for the good of Spain and the world generally.'

At this Harry was silent. He could find no more words to express his feelings. Besides, although all the words, ejaculations, and exclamations above reported were uttered with as much caution and in as low a tone as were consistent with his excited feelings, still, they made more noise than was wise under the circumstances, and there were signs that some of the sleepers were restless. These, at last, attracted the attention of the two and interrupted their conversation. Several heavy sighs from a remote corner of the room showed that some one was awake, or waking, and this warning forced them to keep silence for some time. At length all was still, and Harry ventured to speak again.

'Oh, Katie,' said he, 'can't you do something with that wretched woman?'

'No,' said Katie. 'I'm sure all I say only makes her worse. She wants me now to address her as "your Majesty" !'

'She's mad,' said Harry; 'the woman's utterly mad !'

'Well, she's got some great secret now which she won't tell. As "his Majesty" was leaving, the last time, he kept up some very mysterious whisperings with her. I've been teasing her all day to tell me what they were, but in vain. She's as close as the grave. A great crisis is approaching. And the fun of it is she doesn't know that it's me, and not her, that "his Majesty" means.'

'You! Oh, Katie, don't talk in that indifferent way.'

'Why?'

'Oh, don't you see? You are here so much in his power. Oh, we must fly. I'll hunt along the passage to-night, and I'm sure I'll find something. I'm sure there must be a way out.'

'But I don't want to go,' said Katie; 'that is, not just yet.'

'Not want to go?'

'No, not till I have some more fun, and see how this is going to end; but——'

Here Katie stopped abruptly and clutched Harry's arm convulsively. Harry, too, at the same instant started, and both stood peering into the dark, and listening attentively.

For there had come a sudden noise.

It was a very peculiar and a very startling noise. It was a low, shuffling sound, as of some one moving stealthily, and it arose from the direction of the fireplace—the very place where Harry's retreat would lie in case of discovery. But now that retreat seemed cut off; and there seemed to be some one there who, perhaps, had come on his track. Harry's only thought was that his room had been entered and his absence discovered, upon which his guards had at once come through in search of him. How many there were he could not tell. He could do nothing, however. He could only stand still and watch. Soon, he thought, others would come; lights would be produced, and he would be discovered.

'Leave me !' said Harry, in a faint whisper. 'It's one of the guards. I'm lost !'

Katie's answer thrilled through every nerve of the listener.

'Then if you are lost, I will be lost with you !'

Saying this, she twined both her arms round his arm, and held it pressed tight to her throbbing heart.

Harry stood erect, vigilant, staring.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW SEVERAL OF OUR FRIENDS FIND THEMSELVES IN A MOST EXTRAORDINARY SITUATION.

So Harry stood, with his retreat cut off, staring into the darkness, while Katie, clinging to him, awaited the result. Harry expected every minute that lights would be produced and everything revealed. But the lights did not come and the discovery was delayed. There occurred a pause, during which Harry waited, after which the sliding, shuffling sounds recommenced.

They now came nearer. Then came the sound of a stealthy footfall—very slow, too, and very cautious. The new-comer, the supposed pursuer, whoever he was, seemed now to be in the room, and cautiously advancing. As yet he was under the shadow, and was, therefore, invisible in the gloom ; but he was approaching the place where the moon-beams fell—where he might be seen. Harry noted this, and wondered how many more of them there might be. Katie also looked up now, and stood listening. Both of these were waiting for a chance to separate, if possible—Katie to go back to her own place, and Harry to fly back to his room.

At length the advancing figure reached the place where the moonbeams fell, and here he entered the moonlight, so that it was possible to see his outline, though not to distinguish features. It was a man—he was unarmed, and all his gestures and motions indicated excessive caution and watchfulness. Harry and Katie both saw him, as he groped about and peered through the gloom.

'It's "his Majesty,"' said Katie.

'H-s-s-s-h !' said Harry.

The slight, whispered sounds seemed to catch the ears of the visitor. He stood and listened. But the sounds were not repeated, and he resumed his progress.

'I know who it is,' said Harry, in the faintest possible whisper.

'Who ?'

'It's Ashby,' said Harry.

Katie said not a word in reply, but the effect of that name upon her was none the less manifest. The hands which had been

clasping Harry's arm relaxed their hold ; she moved away from him. Harry caught her hand and tried to detain her, but Katie snatched it away, and Harry was afraid to insist. It was evident that she was offended ; and at what ? Was it at the mention of Ashby's name ? And but a moment before she had said that she would share his fate—'Then if you are lost, I will be lost with you !' Those were her words. And now she was offended !

Harry could not believe it. He took a step after her and found her again. He sought again to take her hand. It was not now refused. Katie seemed to have overcome her irritation. The quarrel was over. So overjoyed was he, that he put his arms round her slender form, and unconsciously pressed her close to his heart, while her head sank down on his breast. And there, all the time, only a few paces off, was Ashby himself !

But the beauty of it was that Ashby just then was not thinking of Katie at all. He had come here to see Dolores. For her he was making this venture, having stolen in through the passageway which she had shown him. He had promised, it is true, not to visit her except in cases of extreme necessity ; but as he had felt very lonely, he concluded that this was the necessity in question, and had come to this place.

The room seemed to him very silent. He had come down the chimney with very little noise, and had surveyed the scene from the dark recesses of the fireplace. The corners of the room were all in darkness, but the floor was illuminated here and there by the moonbeams. Having thus taken a general view, Ashby could do nothing else but go forward ; and this he did, thinking that everyone was asleep, and that by some happy luck he would find Dolores.

As for Dolores, she was not asleep at that time, nor had she been asleep at all. Katie had taken for granted that the beautiful Spaniard was in the land of forgetfulness ; but Katie had never in her life been more entirely mistaken. Dolores was wide awake, and had been engaged in thoughts and speculations which made sleep impossible. It was nothing less than a plan of escape, over which her busy brain was occupied, and there were certain difficulties about it, through which she could not see her way clearly. It was over these that she was puzzling her brain when her attention was roused by certain strange movements in the room.

These were, first, the movements of Katie as she stole to the fireplace and waited there.

Secondly, the movements of Harry as he shuffled down to Katie's side.

Thirdly, the preliminary whisperings of Harry and Katie.

Fourthly, the movements of these two out of the fireplace into the corner of the room.

Fifthly, their continuous whisperings, which sometimes were so animated that they might have wakened any sleeper.

Over all this Dolores was deeply agitated. Who, she asked herself, was this visitor to Katie? It could be one, and one only. That one was Ashby! She had shown him the way. He alone knew it. He had promised her not to come, but he had broken his word and had come. And why? Not for her, but for his English maiden! There were these two now plotting and whispering in her presence, and that, too, after Ashby had disowned with scorn this English maiden, and had spoken such words to her! What could she do now? For such outraged love, such treachery, and such intolerable insult, what revenge could suffice?

Revenge! Yes, nothing less than revenge! For Dolores was not one of those tender and sensitive creatures who could lie down and die under a cruel wrong. Her ardent Southern nature was roused to fury, and she remained there motionless, but like some wild beast ready to start from its lair when the prey is at hand. Away now went all thoughts of flight with Ashby. Vengeance alone remained for her to think of—vengeance full and complete, which should involve both Ashby and the English maiden. What this vengeance was to be, however, she could not think of as yet; but she knew that in order to make it as full and complete as possible, it would be necessary to think it all over from every point of view.

In this amiable frame of mind Dolores was thus waiting and listening—stung to madness by every new whisper, and nourishing her own rage all the more every moment—until at length she became gradually aware of a sound proceeding from another quarter, and not coming from the two whisperers in the corner at all. There was some one in the fireplace—some new-comer who had approached by that way. What did this mean? Who could this be? Did others know of the secret passage-way? If so, then her surroundings were very different from what she had supposed, and her whole course of action would have to be changed.

Dolores watched, and at length saw the figure of the new-comer quite distinct in the moonlight, yet not so distinct as to enable her to ascertain who it was. The idea was so firmly fixed in her mind that the first comer was Ashby, that she could only suppose this new visitor to be one of the Carlists, perhaps 'his Majesty' himself.

Meanwhile this new-comer had been stealthily moving along, and Dolores watched and listened. Now was the time which she might seize, if she chose, as the time for vengeance. If this were really one of the Carlists, above all, if this were 'his Majesty,' she might have sweet revenge by denouncing the false traitor

Ashby on the spot, before he could escape. It would be sweet to see the dismay of the traitor when thus discovered under her own eyes. Still, even in that hour of her madness and her fury, she felt that before taking the irrevocable step and denouncing Ashby it would be necessary to be perfectly sure. So Dolores waited.

Meanwhile Ashby in his progress had passed beyond the place where Dolores was, and had traversed more than half the apartment. At this moment he was at fault, and felt anxious to know where to direct his way. He thought the best way would be to try first if Dolores was awake. And so, in a thin, low, but very distinct whisper, he said: 'Do-lo-res!'

Dolores heard it. Well she knew that in the castle there was no one who called her by that name—save one. Instantly a wild revulsion of feeling took place. She had mistaken—the first visitor was not Ashby. Ashby was not false. He was true. He had come, but he had come for her—herself. It was her name that he called. In that sudden revulsion of feeling she almost shouted for joy. She started up, and, regardless of everything but her own heart, was about to steal toward Ashby, when suddenly she was arrested in her attempt. There arose another sound from some one near the door.

'Here, here,' said a whisper—'here I am. How long you've been!'

Ashby heard this voice, and thinking it was Dolores, hurried there. Dolores heard it, understood Ashby's action, and sank down in consternation and despair. Katie and Harry heard it, and thought it was 'his Majesty' on his way to Mrs. Russell. And they thought that others of 'his Majesty's' followers were in the chimney.

Ashby saw a figure dimly defined in the gloom. It was indistinguishable. He took it for Dolores. So he folded that figure fondly in his arms, and the 'figure' reciprocated to the fullest extent.

'Oh, my own love and darling!' sighed Ashby in Spanish.

Mrs. Russell understood not a word of Spanish. She thought, however, that if 'his Majesty' could express himself more freely in that language, it was certainly quite natural for him to use it; yet it did seem rather unfair to her to come here and talk love and use endearing expressions in an unknown tongue. 'His Majesty' seemed very eloquent and strongly agitated, yet Mrs. Russell could not make out what he said, nor had she a chance to explain. For in the midst of all this there occurred a new interruption. This was the sound of a key turning in the door. The door opened immediately behind Mrs. Russell, and a soft voice said in familiar tones, and in a husky whisper:

'Whis-s-s-sht, darlin'—are ye awake, thin? Sure I hope the gyerruls are aslaope.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN WHICH THE WHOLE PARTY FIND THEMSELVES IN A
HAUNTED CASTLE.

AT the opening of the door and the sound of the voice Ashby started back and retreated. He was very much puzzled at the Irish brogue, and could only think that a stray Paddy might be among the Carlists. However, there was no time to wait, so he sought to regain the fireplace. But as he did so a figure came in his way, arms were flung about him, and a low, faint whisper came close to his ear :

'Oh, Assebi ! I am Dolores ; that other is Mrs. Russell. Fly, or you are lost !'

Here was a new shock for Ashby, but he did not lose his presence of mind. The new-comer was still at the door. He was not followed. All this he noted as he stood for a moment or so holding Dolores in his arms.

As for Mrs. Russell, nothing could exceed her amazement and terror when 'his Majesty' came in behind her at the very moment when she supposed herself to be in 'his Majesty's' arms. It was unintelligible—nay, even frightful.

'Weren't you—your Majesty—here—just now ?' she stammered.

'Me ! Us ! Here ! Divil a bit av us ! We've just come,' was the reply.

'But who was it ? Some one was here.'

'Some one ?' said 'his Majesty.' 'Oh, maybe it was our r'y'l footstep.'

'No—but some one was talking Spanish.'

'Walkin' Spanish, ye maue,' replied the august monarch.

'Sure nobody's been talkin' Spanish here at all at all.'

'But, your Majesty, some one was here—talking to me—close to me.'

'Shure it was one av the gyerruls.'

'No ; it was a—a man !'

'A man !' exclaimed 'his Majesty,' in surprise.

'Yes.'

'What ! here in this room !'

'Yes.'

'Shure ye've been dramin'—so ye have ; or else—maybe it was the castle ghost.'

'The ghost !' groaned Mrs. Russell. 'Oh, your Majesty ! Oh, my own one ! Oh, save me ! Don't—don't let it come near me !'

And, flinging her arms around the royal person, Mrs. Russell clung to it, sobbing hysterically.

'Shure—whisht, will yez, or ye'll waken up the gyerruls,' said the monarch. 'I'll protect yez, if ye'll let me; so I will.'

'Oh!' said Mrs. Russell, clinging more closely to 'his Majesty,' 'do you hear that?'

'What?'

'That noise!'

'What noise?'

'I heard a wow-wow-whisper!' sobbed the lady.

'A whisper—nonsinse!' said 'his Majesty.'

'Oh, listen!' said Mrs. Russell, holding him tight, so that he could not get free. At this 'his Majesty' remained perfectly still, and listened. There certainly were some low, indistinct sounds, among which were whispers.

'Shure it's the gyerruls,' said 'his Majesty.' 'That's what it is.'

'Oh, look! look!' cried Mrs. Russell. 'The ghost! the ghost!'

And with a loud cry Mrs. Russell fell back. 'His Majesty' encircled her with the royal arms, and gently deposited her on the floor, standing thus in deep perplexity. But at this instant a sight caught his eye which made him start. It was Ashby's figure traversing the room, through the moonlight. He had waited up to the last moment, and had just taken his departure, but as he moved along the floor toward the chimney, the royal eye saw him.

'Be jabers!' said 'his Majesty,' 'ghost or no ghost, I must see to this. The castle's haunted as sure as a gun, but that isn't the figure an' farrum av a maydoiayval ghost, so it isn't.'

Mrs. Russell now revived, and struggled up to her feet.

'Is—is—it gig-gig-gone?' she asked with a shudder.

'Sorra a one av me knows,' said 'His Majesty.' 'I'm going to invistigate.'

'Oh!' wailed Mrs. Russell, 'leave me not—oh, your Sacred Majesty, desert me not!'

'Shure, I'm only going to get loights,' said 'his Majesty.'

'Oh, forsake me not! Be not so cruel!'

'Crool! Ah, be off wid yer nonsinse!' said 'his Majesty.'

'Whisht now, jool—sure I'll be back in a jiffy. If it's any one that's got in, I'll find him whin I come back; an' if it's a ghost, why, it's just as well to know it.'

'Oh, your Majesty,' cried Mrs. Russell, 'do not forsake me! Without you it is too—too—too horrible!'

'Shure, ain't I telling yez,' said 'his Majesty,' 'that I'm only goin' to get loights, an' that I'll be back in a jiffy? Be quiet, now, an' it'll be all right.'

With these words 'his Majesty' tried gently, but firmly, to disengage Mrs. Russell's clasped arms from about his neck. This he found much difficulty in doing; but at length he succeeded

in getting free. After this he went out, locking the door behind him.

After about five minutes he returned with a blazing torch, followed by half a dozen men, who remained outside awaiting his summons, while 'his Majesty' alone went in. The moment that the door opened to admit him, some one came rushing into his arms with such violence as almost to extinguish the torch and upset the royal person. 'His Majesty' recovered himself, however, and uttered several ejaculations, which in any less distinguished person would certainly have sounded like profanity.

'Be aisy, now, will yez?' he said, in a milder voice, 'an' howld away yer arrums, jool, till I invistigate the primisis. If it's a livin' man I'll fix him; an' if it's a ghost—begorra, I'll let him go.'

With these words 'his Majesty' succeeded in extricating himself from the clutches of Mrs. Russell, and, holding aloft the torch, began to walk about the room, looking closely everywhere, while Mrs. Russell followed at his heels, entreating him to take care of his royal person.

'Arrah, shure, now,' said 'his Majesty,' 'we're accustomed to danger. We don't moind throifles like this—not a bit av it:

"For divil a bit av me cares,
I'm ready to tackle the foe;
If alive, let him fight if he dares,
If he's dead, to the dogs let him go."

By this time the noise and the flaming torches had seemed to rouse up Katie and Dolores. Both of these now stood up, blinking and shrinking, clinging timidly to one another, and looking like two frightened children just awakened. They seemed so surprised, so confused, and so terrified, that the heart of 'his Majesty' swelled with pity and compassion.

'Ladies! jools!' said he, 'don't, don't give way. Shure, it's all over now, so it is, an' yez needn't be a bit afraid any more.'

'What's all over?' asked Katie, in a tone of alarm.

'What? Why—shure nothin'.'

'There was some one in the room,' said Mrs. Russell in frightened tones.

'Some one in the room!' cried Katie in a voice so full of terror that it became a positive shriek. 'Oh! oh! oh! Who? who? What? what?'

Never was terror more eloquently depicted on any human face than on Katie's expressive countenance on this occasion. She flung herself into Dolores's arms and clung to her. Dolores said nothing, but clung to Katie in silence.

'Alarrums av this sort,' said 'his Majesty,' 'isn't shuited to their delicate, narvous systems—so they isn't. I've got a dhróp

av whisky about me, if—— But I suppose they wouldn't care for it.'

With these words 'his Majesty' approached Katie for the purpose of soothing her, or of paying her some delicate compliment, but Katie contrived to keep Dolores between herself and the royal wooer till the R. W. felt baffled.

'Shure, it's very disthressin', so it is,' said he, as he turned away. 'But I'll take a luk round.'

He looked ali around, walked by the walls, gravely peered into the fireplace, and at length came back.

'There's no one here,' said he.

'But I saw some one,' said Mrs. Russell.

'Shure, thin, it was no livin' man ye saw, and there ye have it.'

'No living man!' screamed Mrs. Russell.

'Shure no; how could it have been? Wouldn't I a seen him, an' me wid a loight?'

'Then it's a ghost?' said Mrs. Russell, with another scream.

'Divil a one else,' said 'his Majesty.' 'It's the castle ghost—only I don't see why he came in modern coshume. But perhaps it isn't the castle ghost. It may be the last prisoner that was shot.'

This last suggestion was unspeakably horrible to Mrs. Russell. Well she knew who that *last prisoner* was! 'The *last prisoner*! Oh, horror! and the apparition was *It*! And *It* had come to *her*!—embraced her!—spoken words of love! It was *He*!—her once loved but now lost Johnny!

The thought was too much. With a wild yell, she flung her arms round 'his Majesty' and fainted.

'It's mesilf,' said 'his Majesty' placidly, 'that 'ud be the proud man to shtay here an' watch wid yez agin the ghost, but juty calls me elsewhere.'

As he said this, he tried to detach the arms of Mrs. Russell, who now clung to him with rigid and death-like tenacity. This, however, he could not do, and as her weight was considerable, he gravely seated himself on the floor, and implored Katie and Dolores to help him. This they did, and their united efforts succeeded in loosening Mrs. Russell's grasp. The stricken lady gave a gasp, and raised her head, but 'his Majesty' was too nimble for her. By a desperate movement he withdrew from her reach, and stood for a moment at a respectable distance.

'Ladies,' said he, 'it's mesilf that 'ud be the proud man to shtay; but there's no danger in the worruld—not the laste in loife, an' this lady requires your care. So I'm thinkin' I'll be off, an' if anythin' happens agin, you sing out.'

Saying these words, 'his Majesty' left the room somewhat more hurriedly than he had entered it. His departure completed Mrs. Russell's prostration. For the remainder of the night she

refused to be comforted, but remained terrified, lamenting bitterly, and exclaiming incessantly, 'Oh, why did he leave me! —why, oh, why did he leave me!'

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN WHICH HARRY MAKES AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY.

HARRY had been the first to escape from the room. He had waited long, fearing lest others might be in the chimney; but at length, as the actions of the new-comer did not seem consistent with those of a pursuer, he had concluded to risk it. He had then entered the chimney, and was able to reach his own room in safety. Ashby had not left until the very last moment, when the door had already opened to admit 'his Majesty,' so that the two had not met. But Harry, on reaching his own room, stood for a long time in the fireplace, listening; and as he listened, he felt sure that he heard sounds, and these sounds seemed as though made by pursuers. Upon this he flung himself upon his bed, where he lay motionless for nearly an hour, until it seemed scarcely possible that there could be any further danger.

He now thought of returning to the room, but after a little consideration decided not to. No doubt they would all be awake, perhaps also others might be there, and to go back might lead to discovery, and destroy all further chances of seeing Katie. Still, the thought would not be dismissed. Sleep was impossible, and he lay awake, recalling the events of the night.

At length there occurred to his mind the thought of those Spanish bonds which he had found and hidden away so carefully. He had not visited the place since, or rather, he had not looked at the hiding-place. He determined to do so now merely for the sake of reassuring himself as to the safety of those precious papers. For Katie's fortune lay wrapped up in that parcel, and he was anxious that he should be the means of saving it for her. In addition to this, he was anxious to search carefully along the passage-way, to see if there might not be openings which had thus far escaped him—which might possibly lead to the outer world.

He provided himself with his torch and found that he had matches enough. He then climbed up into the passage-way, and lighted his torch; after which he proceeded onward until he reached the clink where the package had been deposited. Here he stooped down and held the light close.

The first sight showed nothing. But the string which he had left hanging out was, as he knew, not very perceptible, so he held the light closer and felt for it. Even then he found nothing.

He now thought that perhaps the package had fallen by its own weight a little farther in, drawing the string after it. In order to find whether this were so or not, he reached his hand into the chink.

No sooner had he done this than he snatched it away, and sat there staring.

The chink was very much larger than it had been before.

There was no doubt about this. Then it had been barely wide enough to admit the package. Now he could easily thrust his whole arm into the opening.

It was utterly unaccountable. By some incomprehensible means that crevice had been enlarged. The whole stone, he now saw, had been thrust forward several inches into the passage-way. It seemed as if nothing short of an earthquake could suffice to move from its place such a stone as that. In itself it appeared to be of vast size and weight, and below it, and above it, and on either side, were others equally vast. How was it possible for such a rock to be thus dislodged? By an earthquake? But nothing of the kind had occurred. He was a light sleeper, and was easily aroused by anything unusual. Could the castle have 'settled'? Impossible. It was too old. It had long since shaken down into its deep bed. Still, old buildings do often settle, and in fault of any better explanation he was compelled to adopt something like this.

In any event, there seemed very great danger that the package had been lost. Again and again he thrust his arm far in, but found only vacancy. Then he put his hand downward as far as he could. It touched something which felt like a stone pavement. This pavement was about eight inches lower than the one upon which he was. All this made the matter still more incomprehensible.

But Harry had come forth to seek after this very thing, namely, some mysterious opening into a side-passage, and after the first surprise it occurred to him that this might be what he wished to find. And now the fact of the stone jutting forth became intelligible, though this new explanation promised ill for the safety of the package. It was evident that this stone was movable, and afforded in some way an entrance to this passage. It seemed strange that so vast a stone should be movable, yet there was the fact. Perhaps also it was less massive than it seemed. Perhaps it was a mere slab and opened like a door.

But how?

He now examined its surface with the most careful and minute scrutiny. In vain. Over all the surface and over all the edges there was nothing that indicated any means by which such a stone could be moved—nothing of the nature of hinges, and nothing of the nature of a handle, by which to grasp it so as to

move it. Yet it was movable, and had been moved lately. Perhaps it could be moved without any help from a handle.

He now thrust his arm through, and, grasping it, pulled at it with all his strength. His utmost effort, however, made no impression. He found that the stone was massive within as without, that it was no thin slab, but one which his arm could not surround—at least eighteen inches in solid thickness where his arm held it. Yet the stone did move, and had been moved. The matter became now more incomprehensible than ever. It could be moved. It had been moved, yet there was a secret contrivance here into which he could not penetrate. Again the thought came to him of the package which contained Katie's fortune. Some one had been here. Had that one found the package? It must be so. Fool that he was! A second time had that precious package been deposited in what seemed a secure hiding-place, and a second time had the hiding-place proved almost a public thoroughfare.

For what seemed a long time Harry examined that stone. In vain. The wall arose before him impenetrable. The stone was immovable. Yet that stone seemed now to him to hold within itself the secret not only of the package, but also of escape, and of liberty and life.

Harry at length felt like giving up. Once more, however, though now quite hopelessly, he examined the stone in every direction, pressing with all his strength upon every part. And now in this, the very moment of his utter hopelessness, as often happens—at the very time when not expecting it, he found what he sought.

At the extreme end of the stone, more than six feet from the crevice where he had hidden the package, he pressed upon it, and found that it gave way. The pressure was not at all strong; yet to that slight effort the apparently massive rock yielded like a door, and moved inward several inches. In unspeakable amazement and intense excitement Harry pushed it in farther, until he saw the whole move in, at his pressure, for about two feet. An opening was disclosed. He stepped in and looked around. He found himself in a kind of chamber which was about four feet wide and eight feet long. At the end of this was a stone stairway which went down. Harry looked around, and took all this in at a glance. His first thought was about his package. The package was not there. He had been prepared for this, yet the disappointment was bitter. Still there was consolation in the discovery which he had made, and his excitement and curiosity were yet strong. He naturally turned his attention to that stone which formed so wonderful a doorway, and which had so long baffled him.

He saw that at the end, near the crevice, the stone was

about eighteen inches thick, but that it was all cut away toward the other end, till it ended in a slab of only two inches in thickness. One end of the stone was thus a vast block, while the other was a comparatively thin slab. He now understood the whole construction. At the thick end the door was set with stone pivots, into sockets above and below, by means of which it was easily moved. The reason why he could not move it at first was because he was exerting his strength near the hinge, or pivots, where, of course, it was thrown away ; but as soon as he had touched the farther edge, it yielded to a slight pressure. Here, inside, there was a stone handle by which it was easily opened, while, outside, he thought that it was closed by swinging it as one went out, so that it went by its own weight into its place.

After all, there was nothing very strange in this. Harry had read about such stone doors. In the accounts of the Moabite cities, mention is made of something of the sort, and as those have lasted for three thousand years, this one might well last for several hundred.

But the package ! There were no traces of it. At the hinge end of the slab there was a wedge-shaped stone, by inserting which here the door could be secured against opening from without. Into this wedge-shaped crevice he had thrust the package. He saw also that in pushing it far in he had only secured its discovery, for he must have pushed it so far that the first one who passed had found it. Now, who could that have been ? Whoever it was, the package was gone. No doubt it was one of the Carlists, who had taken it to their leader. It was gone beyond all possibility of recovery.

Harry had been so taken up with his examination of these things that he had forgotten all about the necessity of caution. He stood there thus, in thought, the torch brightly burning, when suddenly he was roused by some one rushing up the steps. He darted back into the passage-way, and banged the stone door after him. Too late. In an instant the pursuer was upon him and had caught at his coat-collar.

But Harry was not the man to give up at the first attack. Quick as lightning, he drew forth a revolver from his breast pocket, and, hastily cocking it, turned to confront his assailant. One look was enough.

‘Ashby !’ he cried.

‘You scoundrel !’ cried Ashby, in a fury. ‘Scoundrel ! villain ! traitor !’

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH THERE IS A VERY PRETTY QUARREL.

IN order to account for the strange and shockingly rude language of Ashby, which must be as astonishing to the reader as it was to Harry, it will be necessary to go back a little.

You see, then, my dears, immediately after Harry's flight, Ashby also had hurried away, and had reached his own room without further adventure. He now began to think that he had acted with mad folly and recklessness; yet at the same time he could not bring himself to regret it at all. He had seen Dolores, and that was enough, and the hunger of his heart was satisfied, for the present at least.

Like Harry, he had a sense of being pursued, which kept him for a long time on the watch, until at length he began to feel safe. All the circumstances of his recent adventure now came to his memory. One thing amidst it all gave him great perplexity. Who were in that room? There had been others, and he had heard the motion of one in particular behind him—some one who seemed to be moving under the chimney. Then came the arrival of 'his Majesty.' But who was that other one? Ashby did not like the appearance of things at all.

After a time, as his confidence became restored, he began to think of going back again, just, as he said to himself, for the sake of listening at the chimney, and seeing that all was right. Putting it in this plausible way, the thought became too tempting a one to be resisted, and at length he started on his way back.

The passage-way, with its secrets, had already been shown him by Dolores. It started from the chimney, and after a few feet came to some steps which ascended to the second floor, upon which were situated the rooms of Harry on the one side and the ladies on the other. The steps thus led upward toward the very passage-way which Harry had been traversing. How they opened into that passage-way, however, has yet to be explained.

As Ashby reached the foot of the flight of steps he became aware of sounds, which brought him to a full stop. Instead of going back, however, he waited. Hidden in impenetrable gloom at the foot of the steps, he could listen, and there was no fear of his being seen. His only idea was that the Carlists were closing up the way.

At length he noticed a faint gleam of light, and after a short interval he noticed that it grew brighter. He then saw the stone door open inward. As he watched he did not move, being

too eager to know what was coming, and feeling confident in his own obscurity.

And now, as he watched, he saw Harry's face suddenly reveal itself, as it was lit up by the flaring torch. Yes, it was Harry, and there he stood, examining everything in the manner already described; and Ashby was a witness of all his proceedings.

As Ashby looked, there came to him a multitude of dark and gloomy suspicions. 'So, then,' he thought, 'Harry knows all about this passage, and, if so, he must know where it leads to. And where was that? It was to only one place—that one room alone. And what would Harry want there, and what would he find? He would find her—Katie!' }

Now, although Ashby was full of bitter resentment against Katie, and was, perhaps, quite in earnest in all that he had said about her to Dolores, yet when he had this fresh confirmation of something like an understanding between these two, he became filled with the bitterest jealousy and indignation.

He had already felt something of these same feelings. He had seen Harry with his own eyes paying devoted attentions to Katie, though he knew that Katie was engaged to him. It was this which had made him turn away from her, for he had seen that she was false to him. Yet his resentment against her did not lessen his jealousy, nay, it intensified it. He regarded Harry as guilty of an offence which was at once the worst and the most unpardonable. He had been false to his friend, and that, too, immediately after he had received that friend's fullest confidence, and had promised that friend his most energetic assistance. Could anything be worse than this?

And now Ashby saw through it all. Harry had traversed that passage-way. He had been in that room. He had seen Katie. Of this he had not a doubt. And what now? No doubt he was plotting about to try to find some way out, so that he might escape with Katie.

Ashby watched with all these bitter thoughts in his mind, until at length he could endure them no longer. He determined to confront his former friend, his present enemy, and meet him face to face; to charge him with his perfidy, and seek for vengeance. With a leap, he bounded up the steps. Harry retreated, yet not so fast but that Ashby caught up with him, and grasped him as he was flying. Then Harry turned, pistol in hand, and the two stood face to face.

'Ashby!' cried Harry.

And Ashby cried out:

'Scoundrel! villain! traitor!'

His face was white, and his voice hoarse with passion.

Harry was confounded.

'Hang it, Ashby; don't you know me? Are you mad?'

'Know you!' cried Ashby bitterly. 'Thank heaven, I do know you! I've found you out, you infernal sneak, you! Know you? Good heavens! yes, I know you for a scoundrel, and a contemptible, double-dealing interloper and villain!'

Harry stood aghast.

'What in the name of Heaven is the meaning of all this?'

'You've been in that room!' cried Ashby, pointing up the passage-way.

'Well, what if I have?'

'What if you have? You know what you went there for?'

Thus far Harry had been too much amazed to understand anything. But now he began to see what it all meant.

'Oh, ho!' said he; 'so that's it?'

'That's it! of course that's it!' cried Ashby. 'Isn't that enough? sneaking after that girl, when you know that she is mine. What the devil have you got to say for yourself?'

At this Harry began to rouse himself. He didn't feel like defending his conduct, and now, as was natural, took refuge in a fight.

'Confound you!' he cried; 'what do you mean by such insults as these? Who are you? What business is it of yours?'

'She's engaged to me. I took you into my confidence, and you've turned out a traitor and a sneak.'

Harry drew a long breath, and instantly recovered his usual coolness.

'My dear sir,' said he, 'you have a pretty talent for scolding. Nature evidently intended you to be an old woman; but doesn't it strike you that this sort of thing isn't customary among gentlemen, and that you are making an infernal fool of yourself? Do you suppose I'm to ask your permission where to go in this castle? I found this passage-way myself, and hope to find others also. And, by Jove!' he continued, as at this moment the thought of the lost parcel came to him, 'there's one matter I should like to settle with you before we go any farther.'

'We shall have to settle several matters.'

'I left a parcel in this place a short time ago. It was a very valuable one. I should like to ask you if you have it?'

'I? I, sir? I have your parcel?'

'I don't mean to say that you took it knowing it to be mine.'

'Oh! you don't, don't you?'

'Mr. Ashby, will you give me a frank answer to a fair question? Do you know anything about that parcel?'

'Parcel? Pooh!' said Ashby, who thought that this was some transparent trick of Harry's to account for his presence

here. 'Confound you and your parcels ! I know nothing about them. I——'

'I ask you, did you pick up that parcel?'

'And I say, confound your parcels !'

Harry was growing quite as furious as Ashby. He now felt certain that Ashby had found it and had it in his possession. He considered Ashby's answers as papable evasions of a direct question.

'Well, then,' he said, 'I say that if you still keep that parcel after I claim it, that you are keeping property that is not yours, and you know what that means !'

Ashby gave a bitter laugh.

'This is a hint that I am a thief,' said he.

'And a very strong one, too, I rather think,' said Harry. 'Do not imagine that you have any claims to that package arising out of any previous relations to a certain young lady?'

'A certain young lady !—a package ! What do you mean ? I neither know nor care. I only know that you and I must settle accounts with one another.'

'By Jove, that's one sentiment in which I agree !'

'If I hadn't found you here, I might have only suspected ; but now that I've found you, I do not merely believe, but know that you are a——'

'Confound you ! if you begin your infernal abuse again, I'll blow your brains out ! I haven't got your talent for scolding. If you want to settle accounts with me, come along like a man, and don't stand there jawing like a fishwife.'

'By heavens ! that will I—and here——'

'Here ! pooh ! Come along to my room.'

'Lead on—I'll follow.'

At this Harry led the way, and in a short time, followed by Ashby, he once more reached his own room.

And so it had come to this ! The friends who, a few days before, had been so intimate, so confiding, and so affectionate, now stood face to face as foes, glaring at one another with defiance in their eyes and bitter hate in their hearts. Each thought he had received sufficient provocation to seek the life of the other, and each thought that he had received from the other insults which could only be wiped out in blood.

Harry felt sure that Ashby had found the package which he had concealed so carefully, and was holding it on the ground of his engagement to Katie. Such a right Harry might possibly have conceded to Russell, as Katie's guardian, especially as he had been the one who last had held it ; but to Ashby he never would surrender it. As to Ashby, his bitterness and jealousy have already been fully set forth, and they were now more intense than ever.

Harry stuck the torch in a hollow stone in the floor which appeared to have been made for that purpose. Then he turned to Ashby.

'Now, sir,' said Ashby, 'you have already heard.'

'No more, I beg,' said Harry; 'not a word. Let's fight like gentlemen, not jaw like bullies. Have you a pistol?'

'No.'

'That's unfortunate. There's no knowing at what time a pistol may be needed.'

'No,' said Ashby bitterly. 'If I had known that you would prove a scound—'

'By heavens!' roared Harry, 'if you don't shut up I'll put a bullet through you! Do you hear? Come now,' he continued, growing cooler, 'we've both said enough, more than enough. Remember that when two gentlemen meet in mortal combat the time for insult is over. We have no seconds. Let us try to imitate the punctiliousness of seconds in our treatment of each other. Do you consent?'

Ashby bowed.

'And now, Mr. Ashby,' continued Harry, 'as you say you have no pistol, is there anything else that you can suggest? Have you a knife?'

'Nothing but a penknife.'

'Ah, that's very unfortunate. If we could only get hold of a couple of rifles from our friends here outside, we should be all right, but there's no use in hoping for that. Our ransom is too high for them to risk losing it. And so, as far as I can see, the only thing left is for us to use this one pistol of mine.'

'One pistol? How can both of us use one pistol?'

'We must. There's nothing else to be done.'

Ashby shook his head.

'I don't see how,' said he.

'It's plain enough,' said Harry. 'We can take it turn about.'

'But the man who fires the first shot has an immense advantage,' said Ashby.

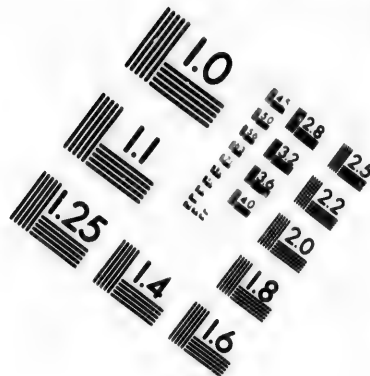
'Pardon me,' said Harry; 'that does not necessarily follow. He may hit his foe, of course, but the wound may only be a trifling one after all; or he may miss his shot altogether. It often happens so in duels. Moreover, as you very well know, in a duel it never happens that both fire at the same instant. One always fires a little before the other. So in our case it will simply amount to this, that one of us will fire a little before the other. In that case the first man may miss, and the second man will then come in for his turn.'

'But how shall we decide who is to fire first?' said Ashby.

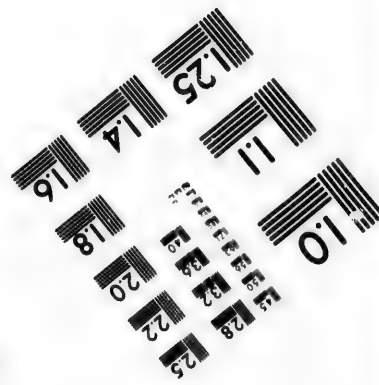
'Oh, that's easy enough,' said Harry; 'we can toss up.'

'Oh, very well.'



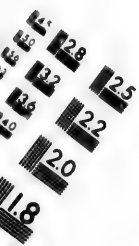


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'Have you a coin?'

'Not one.'

'Nor I—not a copper, even. The beggarly Carlists have drained me dry.'

'We must find something else,' said Ashby.

'Oh, there needn't be any difficulty about that. A button will do quite as well.'

And with this Harry cut one of the buttons from his trousers.

'This will do,' said he. 'The face of the button will be "head," and the back of it "tail." And now, will you try it?'

He handed it to Ashby, who took it without a word.

'If it falls "heads," the first fire will be yours; if "tails," the first fire will be mine.'

'Very well,' said Ashby; and then, poising the button for a moment, he tossed it.

It fell, head uppermost.

'Heads!' said Harry. 'Mr. Ashby, the first fire belongs to you. Here's the pistol. It's loaded. I'll take my position here. Shall I measure the distance?'

'Pardon me, Mr. Rivers,' said Ashby; 'but I cannot accept this from one throw. It must be the best out of three times.'

'I don't see why.'

'I should not accept it under any other conditions.'

'Oh, very well. Let us both act so as to satisfy one another,' said Harry. 'In that case you had better toss again.'

Ashby now picked up the button, and tossed a second time. This time it fell face downward.

'Tails!' said Harry. 'Once more, and that decides it.'

Ashby picked up the button and gave a final toss. The button fell. This time it was in Ashby's favour. It fell face upward.

'Heads!' said Harry. 'It's yours, Mr. Ashby. Will you take the pistol?'

Ashby hesitated.

'I think,' said he, 'we had better arrange our places.'

'Very well. At what distance?' said Harry. 'Shall we say twelve paces?'

'I should think so.'

Upon this Harry began by the fireplace and walked for twelve paces along the floor. Reaching this place, he stopped.

'Will this do?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Very well; and now, which place will you take?'

'Either.'

'In that case we must toss up again for choice of positions. But, first of all, it will be necessary to move this torch, so that it shall be equally favourable.'

Saying this, Harry walked over to the torch, and carried it, together with the stone, to a place which seemed about midway between the two positions. Here he set it on the ground.

'And now, Mr. Ashby,' said Harry, 'we must toss up for places.'

'Very well,' said Ashby; 'but you had better toss this time, as I did it last time.'

To this Harry made no objection. He took the button, and tossed it. This time luck was favourable, and he won the choice of positions.

'Well,' said he, 'I'm quite indifferent; but, as I have the choice, I suppose I may as well choose the place out there in the room. In that case you will stand here in front of the fireplace.'

'Very well,' said Ashby, who thereupon took up his place there.

'Have you any plan to propose as to firing?'

'None whatever.'

'I've been thinking of one which I will mention. You may have a better one. The unarmed one shall give the word, or drop a handkerchief. Will that do? If you prefer for the one who fires to give the word—very well. Only I think that the word had better be given.'

'Certainly,' said Ashby, 'and I quite agree to your proposal.'

'Very well,' said Harry; 'and now, Mr. Ashby, here is the pistol.'

Saying this, he handed the weapon to Ashby, who took it with a slight bow, but in silence.

Harry now measured off twelve paces once more, and reached the spot which he had before marked out, upon which he turned, and, standing erect, faced Ashby.

'Mr. Ashby,' said he, 'are you ready? If so, take aim, and I will give the word.'

Ashby raised the pistol and took aim. The weapon covered Harry, and he knew it. He knew also that Ashby was a 'dead shot.' But not a nerve quivered. He stood up there as straight as a ramrod, and then, in a calm, clear voice, with his usual self-possession, said:

'One; two; three. *Fire!*'

For a moment Ashby stood with his pistol thus covering Harry.

Then his arm fell.

'I cannot,' said he—'I cannot fire, in cold blood, on an unarmed man.'

Now, had Ashby stood thus, with a pistol, in the full heat of his first fury, he would have fired, without stopping to think; but the effect of their enforced courtesy to one another, and

more particularly of the somewhat tedious preliminaries, had been to calm and even chill his hot anger, and to subdue all his fierce excitement. As he stood there, with his pistol levelled, and saw Harry's cool, calm face, it seemed like butchery. He could not fire. And so his hand dropped down with this exclamation.

'But my turn is to come.'

'Oh, that's nothing,' said Ashby. 'You may have your turn now, if you choose.'

'Oh no,' said Harry, 'I can't take my turn until after you have fired; and the worst of it is, I don't see how we can settle this difficulty, if we don't do it now.'

'Other chances will, no doubt, occur,' said Ashby.

'Pardon me,' said Harry, 'that is hardly probable, and, besides, that will not help the matter. In fact, it will only make it worse. For you see, if some time should elapse before such a meeting, the recollection of this affair would be so faint that I could not go into it with any spirit; whereas now I am all cocked and primed. So fire away, my dear fellow, for I really don't want to have an affair of this sort hanging over me the rest of my life. We must have it out, and now's the time.'

'Will you not fire first, Mr. Rivers?' said Ashby earnestly.

'Oh no, that would make all our preparations childish,' was the reply. 'We have appealed to Fortune, and her decision has been given.'

Ashby drew a long breath.

'Mr. Rivers,' said he, 'I cannot shoot an unarmed man in cold blood.'

'But what can we do?' said Harry.

'Why, we may be able to borrow a couple of rifles, or even one rifle, from our friends here.'

Upon this a voice rang out, full and clear, in the room:

'Begorra, an' that same they'll do. Whoroc, lads! this bates the worruld, so it does. It's mesilf that's stud by the dure for the last tin minutes, an' I've seen a soight that I won't forget till me dyin' day. It's loike the toime whin the Irish exiles at Fontenoy marched up to the English gyards an' said, "Gintlemen av the English Gyards, fire first!" Begorra, it's mesilf that 'ud be the proud man to lend yez the loan av a couple av guns; but don't be alarrumed, darlints—after yez pay yer ran-shom, ye'll have a chance.'

At the first sound of that voice Harry and Ashby started in amazement. So intent had they been on their own business that they had heard nothing; and Ashby, though facing the door, had been so intent on Harry that he had not noticed that it had been half opened. Now they saw the Carlist chief come in, followed by half a dozen of his men. Most amazing of all

was the discovery that he spoke English with an Irish brogue. Katie had already mentioned this to Harry, but he had not thought much about it. Now, face to face with 'his Majesty,' they were able to look at him with other feelings. Had he entered under other circumstances, he would have talked Spanish; but so excited was he that he burst forth in the manner above detailed.

'For ye see,' said 'his Majesty'—

"Mesilf does admire the best,
Av all that's undher the sun,
To stand tacin' the friend av me sowl,
Wid blunderbus, pistol, or gun.
The word av command it is given,
The weapon we both av us raises,
Aftther which—sure the one laves for home,
An' off goes the other to blazes!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW THE VIRTUOUS RUSSELL FINDS A FRIEND IN NEED.

It is necessary here to go back for a brief interval, in order to take up the fortunes of one who some time ago disappeared from these pages.

The virtuous Russell was alone. He had passed a night which, considering his situation, had not been altogether uncomfortable. He had slept a refreshing sleep, and in the land of dreams had been able to forget the ills of life. Morning came, however, and with his waking thoughts there returned the recollection of the past, and the full consciousness of his present position. He was a captive in a prison from which he could not hope to escape; at the mercy of a powerful and cunning enemy, who knew his secret, and would use every effort to get his money. If he refrained for the present from exerting violence, it was only too probable that this forbearance was but temporary, and that at the last the prisoner must yield. These were gloomy thoughts, and the good Russell was well-nigh overwhelmed.

But the greatest calamities are often alleviated by comparative trifles; and so it was a trifle which, on this occasion, served to soothe the sorrows of our suffering friend—such a trifle, in fact, as a mere costume. Whether it was that, being a tailor, he was more affected than others by his raiment; or whether it was that a man's dress has, as is claimed, a potent influence which always affects the wearer, need not be discussed; certain it is, that just now it was his novel attire which chiefly engaged the thoughts of Russell, and made him less sensible of his misfortunes.

As a dress it was certainly magnificent. The cloth was of the

finest quality. Gold was lavished freely upon it—gleaming in the numerous buttons ; shining in the profuse lace which glittered over the breast and round the cuffs and round the collar in a flood of glory ; sparkling in the hatband ; flowing down the skirts like the oil from Aaron's beard. Many a time had his own fancy designed and his own hands fashioned such an array as this for others ; but now, as it enfolded his own ample person, it shone with new lustre, and threw something of its own lustre around the wearer.

And now, as the actor, when arrayed in the robes of majesty, assumes a kingly port and struts about the stage, so our Russell. He took to himself the part which the uniform suggested. He felt like the general of an army. He threw out his chest, stood erect, strutted, admired his figure and his gait, waved in his hand an imaginary sword, and guided invisible armies to the field of battle.

In the midst of all this he was suddenly roused by a slight noise behind him. Turning hastily, he saw a woman who had entered bearing some articles of food for his morning's repast. In a moment Russell descended from the lofty heights of imagination to the dull realities of cold world, and, in plain language, began to feel rather sheepish at being discovered in such a frame of mind. Nay, this very frame of mind, this new sense of personal dignity as general, made his chagrin all the greater.

The woman was attired in a picturesque costume, such as is worn by the lower orders in the North of Spain, with the addition, however, of a bright-coloured turban. Her face was decidedly handsome, though rather too sharp in outline and expression, while at the same time decidedly the worse for wear. A pair of fine bold black eyes were fixed upon Russell with an expression of undisguised admiration as she stood looking at him. The moment he turned she looked down, and then, dropping a courtesy, said :

'Breakfast, señor.'

Upon this she deposited her tray upon a heavy oak table, and then stood looking at him with the same expression as before. There was something in all this which was flattering to the vanity of Russell ; and he stood regarding the woman with very much complaisance. And as he looked at her, he thought to himself that she was a very pretty woman.

The woman then said, still looking at him :

'Beautiful ! Oh, lovela !'

She spoke in broken English ; and Russell, while flattered by her admiration, was delighted at hearing his own language.

'Do you speak English, my dear ?' he said, in a tone of affectionate familiarity, drawing nearer to her.

'Oh yes—me speak Ingles—me in Cuba—learn speak Ingles vara mooch.'

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'Oh! so you've been in Cuba, have you, my dear? Well, Cuba's a very pretty country, and you're a very pretty woman.'

The woman smiled, showing rows of splendid teeth.

'Señor mus' be a gran' nobile—a generale.'

Russell smiled a lofty smile, and laid his hand patronizingly, yet tenderly, upon the woman's shoulder.

'You are a very sensible woman,' said he, 'and as pretty as you are sensible. What is your name?'

'Rita,' said the woman.

'Well, Rita, I dare say you and I shall be great friends.'

'Friends! oh, señor is too much magnifico—'

'Oh, I ain't proud, my dear—not a bit, not a mite. I've got plenty of money, Rita, and can help my friends; but I ain't proud, not me. And what may be your particular duties in this establishment?'

'Señor?'

'I say, what do you do here? Are you housekeeper?'

'Señor, I am maid—to the lady prisoners—an' other things—to servar and attendar.'

'Prisoners, eh? Do they have many of them here?'

'Oh—sometime,' said Rita, with a laugh; 'ladies and gen'tlms.'

Russell looked at her with a benignant smile.

'Well, Rita, all that I can say is, it's a pity that such a pretty woman as you cannot have some better fortune than this.'

Rita laughed.

'Ah, señor, you a flattera!'

'Oh no. I'm a plain, blunt, bluff, honest John Bull. But the fact is, you are very pretty, Rita, my dear!'

Rita laughed again at this, and her large black eyes fixed themselves with bolder admiration upon the benignant face and splendid dress of the gallant tailor.

Here a happy thought occurred to Russell's mind.

It was evident that this woman was already an admiring friend. Could he not, in some way, work upon her so as to attract her to his interests? Her help would be invaluable. She might, if she chose, do much; she might even help him to escape. It was worth trying. To win her over to his side, there was nothing which he would not try. But how could he get her help? By bribery? Of course, to a certain extent; but it would be well to be cautious, and not offer too much. Other means might be used. By gaining her good-will, she would be more accessible to a bribe, and would be less exacting.

Now, Russell was sharp at a bargain, and by no means anxious to pay more than he could help. Even where his own liberty, even where his life was concerned, he paused to consider the expense. He resolved to bribe this woman, but to name no price, to let it be undecided, to agree in a general way; and

afterward, should he succeed in gaining his liberty, to cut the amount down as low as possible. He also resolved to put money out of the question as far as he could, and work upon her goodwill and her affections, rather than her avarice. The woman's open, undisguised admiration seemed to promise an easy conquest. To him she appeared to have a frank, guileless, impetuous disposition, all of which was a great help to the furtherance of his designs.

Russell looked all around.

'Oh,' said Rita, 'do not fear—all away.'

'Come, my dear,' said Russell; 'sit down here by my side; I want to talk with you.'

Russell seated himself on an oaken bench, and Rita promptly seated herself by his side. She sat by him, and looked at him with a smile, and with the same fervid admiration.

'The pretty child!' thought Russell, as he caught the glance of her glowing eyes. 'How she does admire me!'

'So you are an attendant here, are you, Rita, my dear?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'But it isn't good enough for such a pretty woman as you are,' he continued.

'Ah, señor, what do you mean?' said Rita. 'What can I do better?'

'But you ought to be something better—far better. Would you not like to——'

'Like what?' asked Rita, who was full of excitement.

'Well,' said Russell, 'to have plenty of money, to have beautiful clothes, to live in a beautiful house, to have jewels, to have amusements, and so forth?'

Rita's dark eyes flashed fire with eager covetousness at this alluring speech.

'Oh, señor,' she said, 'it is impossible.'

'Rita!' said Russell, in a solemn voice.

'Señor!'

'Look at me.'

'Si, señor.'

Rita had been looking at him all along fixedly enough, but at this invitation she threw additional earnestness into the deep glance of her bold, dark eyes.

'You see what I am, Rita, my dear. I am a prisoner—in grief, in despair. Now, if any one would help me, I could do very much for that one.'

'You are a gran' nobile?' said Rita, in an inquiring tone.

'Oh yes,' said Russell, in his large way; 'and, what's more, I can make you happy for the rest of your life. I like you, Rita. I'm quite fond of you. You're an uncommonly pretty woman.'

Saying this, Russell took Rita's hand and pressed it with much emphasis. Now, the interpretation which Rita put upon these words and this action was very different from what Russell intended. The benignant Russell merely wished to impress upon Rita's mind that he had very friendly feelings toward her, and that, if she would help him, he was in a position to reward her handsomely. He didn't want to name any sum. He wished, for obvious reasons, to leave the amount unsettled. But Rita understood it differently. Being of a sentimental turn, she regarded this as a sort of declaration of love—in fact, almost an offer of marriage—and, if not so altogether, at least an approach to it. Still, she was a shrewd woman, and waited until Russell had explained himself further.

Russell observed her silence, and was quite satisfied. It showed proper caution, and caution was an excellent quality in one whom he wished to have for a helper in his need. So he went on in the same way, still holding Rita's hand.

'You are so pretty, Rita, my dear, I swear I never before saw such a pretty woman. This isn't the place for you. You must get out of this; and if you will only go away with me, why, there's nothing that I wouldn't do for you. When I like a person, I'm ready to do anything for them. And the first moment I saw you, I said to myself, "There's the woman for you!"'

'Am I really the woman for you?' asked Rita, full of excited hopes, and still continuing to misinterpret his words.

'The very one!' said Russell. 'The one of all others! Heaven has sent you to me. Rita, my dear, do what I ask!'

Rita was deeply moved. This brilliant, wealthy stranger seemed to love her. He wanted her to fly with him. But oh, if he should prove false!

'Ah, señor, you not earnest—you not true!' said Rita, clasping his hand in both of hers.

'True! earnest!' cried Russell. 'I swear, Rita, my dear, I will be true to what I say—always, always! Can't you trust me, Rita, my dear?'

'Oh, señor,' sighed Rita, deeply moved, 'you persuade me too easy. And think on the danger—the life is risk—the death will come if we are captured.'

'Rita, my dear,' said Russell, 'let us not talk of danger. Let us fly together. I will always remember your devotion. I will never forget you as long as life lasts. I am noted for my truth and fidelity. I've got a warm and throbbing heart. And now, Rita, my dear, if you want one who will always be yours truly—if you want one who will love you and care for you—why, I'm your man!'

Upon these words Rita put, as usual, her own interpretation.

The last words especially—'I'm your man'—seemed to her to be the most direct offer yet.

'My man?' she said—'and will you be my man, señor?'

'Of course—of course,' said Russell, not comprehending her drift.

Upon this Rita flung her arms around the neck of the astonished Russell.

'Oh, señor—then—I helpa you. I yours—I do all. We fly—you be true—to your Rita.'

Russell was so astonished that for some time he said nothing; but feeling how important it was to retain her friendship, he did not dare to disabuse her of her false idea; nay, he even felt that it would be better for her to entertain it, since she had it. So he put his arm around her and kissed her.

Suddenly Rita started up.

'I mus' go,' she said. 'I will soon return.'

And with these words she hurriedly retreated, leaving Russell to his breakfast and his meditations.

Russell had been very successful in his attempt to win over Rita to his interests; in fact, too successful. His success caused him at first not a little perplexity. Rita, he perceived, had misunderstood him; but then, in making friendly advances to a woman who was not very well up in the English language, it was next to impossible to preserve those nice and delicate shades of meaning which he had intended. Upon the whole, however, after mature consideration, he concluded that it had all turned out for the best.

It was evident that this woman had formed a very strong attachment for him. Very well. She would be all the more devoted to his interests, and turn all her thoughts and energies toward securing his escape. Things could not have turned out better. He had not intended it, but if Rita chose to misunderstand him, why should he try to undeceive her? The more she cared for him, the better it would be for him. And thus Russell, out of his selfish desires for his own safety, allowed himself to trifle with the heart's best affections, and beguile poor Rita, and allure her with hopes that could never be realized.

After all, however, there were grave obstacles in his way. Could he desert his wife and leave her in such peril? Or, worse, could he leave those precious bonds, which he had so carefully hidden! If he did, he might never see them again.

Was it possible to get them before leaving? Would it be safe to tell Rita, and direct her to get them for him? This thought occupied him for some time, and he almost made up his mind to do so. But the risk was too great. After all, Rita might be a spy in the interests of 'his Majesty,' and sent to worm his secret out of him. No, it would not be safe. It would be safer to leave

the bonds where they were. If he escaped, he might hope to obtain assistance from the Government, in which case he might be able to come back with them, to show them the way, and then, when the castle was recaptured, he might be able to regain his treasure. And so he decided finally upon this course.

At midday Rita returned, bringing his dinner, a savoury *olla podrida*. She set it down, and then threw her arms round the embarrassed Russell, who was seated on the bench, murmuring words of endearment in unintelligible Spanish. He bore it well, however, and, remembering his necessities, he tried to exhibit those feelings which might be expected from him.

Rita this time had a bundle with her, which she gave to Russell, directing him to hide it under the bench for the present.

'You mus' disguisar,' she said; 'this is a woman dress——'

'A woman's dress?'

'Oh, no dificultad. You wait till avenin', then you put him on, ofer your militar coat—just as you stands. Alla right; then you disguisado, and commalong me. I be alla ready. You waita forra mi. But not you put him on till avenin', or mighta be discovaire, you know. Ha, señor?'

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH TWO FUGITIVES HAVE A STARTLING ADVENTURE, NOT WITHOUT PERIL.

EVENING came, and Russell, with Rita's assistance, put on the woman's dress over his general's uniform. The skill of Rita was exerted to give her companion the appearance of a female somewhat stricken in years, and her success was marked. Perhaps it was this very success that affected the soul of Russell; for no sooner did he look like an old woman than he began to feel and act like one. Away went all his courage, and he would have drawn back after all, had not Rita urged and almost forced him away.

'Allarighta,' she said. 'The men all gone insidar, and so ongrly they think of ony the eaters. So come, my dear. No one shall see. You be trust to myselfa—an' we go like snake in the grasses.'

Russell thus allowed himself to be hurried away by his bolder companion on the path that led to liberty. Rita led the way out into the upper hall, and Russell followed, not without great trepidation, and bitter regret at his rashness, expecting at every step to see 'his Majesty,' and of course to be arrested and flung into some deep, dark dungeon. One or two men were there, who, however, took no notice of them.

After this they descended the stairs and entered the lower hall. Here, to the immense dismay of Russell, he beheld what seemed to be the entire Carlist band. It was their feeding-time. A huge pot was in the middle of the hall, and these men were dipping out of it their respective portions of some savoury mess whose odour filled the air. Russell shrunk down almost into his boots at the first sight; but as Rita walked along, he had no alternative except to follow her. Little danger was there, however, of his being observed. All the men were too intent upon their evening meal to notice what seemed like two very commonplace women who probably belonged to the castle. And thus Russell, to his unspeakable relief, passed through this ordeal unquestioned and even unnoticed.

Having passed through the lower hall, they emerged into the outer courtyard. Here, as he passed through the door, Russell was just drawing a long breath, and thinking within himself that the worst was over, when suddenly, without any warning, there approached them no less a personage than 'his Majesty' himself—the very last man, as it is needless to say, whom Russell would have chosen to meet. At that sight the soul of Russell, which had been slowly struggling upward, once more sank down into his boots, carrying down with it all hope, and all desire, and almost all consciousness.

There was not the slightest chance of avoiding him. He was coming straight toward them. What was worse, his eyes were fixed upon them.

'Ah, Rita,' said 'his Majesty' in Spanish, 'where are you going in the dark?'

Rita paused and made a low obeisance. Russell did the same.

'I'm going over there to see about some washing,' said Rita.

'Ah ha!' said 'his Majesty,' 'if you only were going alone I should say that some brave boy was intending to help you at your washing. But you have a friend with you.'

Saying these words, 'his Majesty' looked hard at the shrinking Russell, who now felt his soul all oozing out at the seams of his boots. He stood trembling, shrinking, expecting the worst.

But Rita was equal to the occasion.

'Oh, this is my aunt,' said she, 'that I told you about. I asked her to come here and help me. She's a little rheumatic, being old, but she can do a good turn at hard work yet; and she's a good cook, too, and she can spin well—oh, beautifully; and she is a wonder in her way. Oh, we shall have a better *olla podrida* than you ever tasted when the good old aunt goes to work.'

'Your aunt—ah!' said 'his Majesty,' in a tone that savoured of disappointment. 'H'm—well, Rita, the next time you want help, don't send for any of your aunts, but send for some one of your nieces. They will be far more welcome in a lonely place like

this. *Olla podridas* are all very well, no doubt, but what I should prefer would be some one who could touch the guitar, and sing a lively song.'

And with these words 'his Majesty' retired.

'Come,' said Rita to the almost senseless Russell. 'Come.'

Again Russell followed her. She led the way toward an archway in the wall on one side of the courtyard. Entering this, they found themselves in an arched room, in which it was difficult to see through the dim twilight. But to Rita the way seemed quite familiar, for she walked on and told Russell to follow without fear. At length she stopped, and as Russell came up to her, she said :

'We descenda—steps does be here—I takes your hand and helps.'

She took his hand, and began to descend. With this assistance Russell was able to follow without much difficulty. Soon it became quite dark, and continued so for some time, during which Rita led him onward as quickly as possible. At length she paused.

'You mus' be careful,' she said ; 'here is the steps brokes, an' you shall go slow—and not slips.'

It was so dark here that Russell could see nothing ; but he felt that Rita was descending, so he prepared to follow. The steps here had been broken in places, leaving a rough, inclined plane, with loose stones and mortar. There was no great difficulty in descending, but it was dark, and Russell's long skirts were very much in the way. However, by moving slowly, and by exercising great caution, he was able to reach the bottom without any accident.

Here Rita took his hand and again led him on. It now began to grow lighter, until at last objects were plainly discernible. The light was caused by the moonbeams, which shone in through a place where the outside wall was broken away. Looking through the opening, Russell saw, not far distant, a precipice, with bits of shrubbery here and there. Soon they came to the opening itself.

He found himself on the verge of a deep chasm, the very one already mentioned. Above the opening projected part of what had once been a bridge, but which had long since fallen. On the opposite side was the tower where Brooke and Talbot had found refuge. The bridge had once crossed to the tower, and, since it had fallen, this opening had been made, from which the chasm could be crossed by descending on one side and ascending the other. The slope was steep and rough. Russell, as he looked down, could not see any chance of farther progress in this direction.

'We mus' go down here,' said Rita.

'Here?' said Russell. 'How? I can't go down!'

'Oh, it is easy; you mus' follow. I show the ways,' said Rita; and saying this, she stepped down from the opening upon a ledge of rock. Then, turning to the right, she went on for a pace or two and turned for Russell. Seeing her walk thus far with ease and in safety, he ventured after her. The ledge was wide enough to walk on without difficulty; and, although the chasm was deep, yet the side did not run down steeply enough to make him feel anything like giddiness. The pathway was easy enough when one had a guide to show the way; and thus Russell, following closely behind Rita, reached the bottom. Then, crossing the brook, she led the way up on the opposite side by the path already mentioned, and at length both reached the tower, and paused to take breath.

Thus far no alarm had been given in the castle. Every step increased Russell's confidence, and when he gained the tower he felt sure of escape. But to wait here long was not to be thought of; so, after a few moments spent in regaining breath, the two set forth to continue their flight.

At length, after a fatiguing journey, they reached the main road, and here they turned toward the south, in which direction they went for some miles.

They had now been walking for many hours, and Russell, who was quite unused to any exercise of this sort, was greatly fatigued. Nothing, indeed, but the dread of capture and the thought of a merciless pursuer on his track had kept him up so long. He felt that he had reached the utmost limit of his strength.

At last they caught sight of a windmill in a field on the right. The sight enlivened him. Here, he thought, they might hide and obtain rest. He said this to Rita. She acquiesced. To gain the windmill was now their chief desire.

Nearer they came, and nearer.

But now, just when all seemed gained, they saw a number of armed men coming toward them, and in a few minutes they were arrested by the followers of Lopez.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW DANGERS THICKEN AROUND THE DESPAIRING RUSSELL.

THE moon was still shining very brightly, and they could see very well the faces and the uniforms of their captors. The sight of the government uniforms was very reassuring to Rita, who was only anxious to escape from the Carlists; but the first glance which Russell gave at the captain of the band overwhelmed him with terror. He recognised Lopez, and saw that he had fallen into the hands of one who had no reason, and perhaps no inclina-

tion, to show him the slightest mercy. At that sight all Russell's courage subsided, and he fell into a state of mental prostration as extreme as that which he had experienced when 'his Majesty' had confronted him in his flight.

For, unfortunately for him, Lopez had received at his hands treatment which was sufficient to inspire a deep resentment even in a man less impetuous than this hot-blooded Spaniard. First, he had not only discouraged his attentions to Katie, but had prohibited them in every possible way, and in the most positive and insulting manner. Again, but a short time before this, at the railway station at Madrid, he had caused him to be ejected from the railway-carriage. For all this he felt that Lopez must cherish a deep desire for vengeance, and would rejoice now if he were to discover that his enemy had become his prisoner. In such an emergency as this, Russell was utterly helpless, and could only hope that his disguise might baffle Lopez, or that the quick wit of Rita might be able to save him from discovery.

After regarding them for a sufficient time, Lopez began an examination of the prisoners.

'Who are you?' he asked.

Rita answered.

'I am a poor woman,' said she, 'and this lady is a foreigner who does not understand Spanish.'

'What are you doing here alone on this road?'

'We are fugitives.'

'Fugitives from whom?'

'From the Carlists.'

At this Lopez was visibly excited.

'The Carlists?' he asked. 'Where are they? Where did you leave them? Tell the truth, woman, and you shall be rewarded. But if you are false, I shall regard you both as spies.'

'Noble captain, I am anxious to tell the truth, and glad that we have fallen among friends. We have escaped from an old castle some distance away, and have been flying for hours—'

'A castle?' said Lopez, interrupting her; 'where is it?'

'There, to the North,' said Rita.

'Oh, very well. I shall be able to find out from you again where it may be situated; but now tell me more about yourselves. What were you doing at the castle?'

'Noble señor, about three weeks ago I was taken prisoner by the Carlists, and they took me to this castle, where they made me serve as an attendant on the prisoners. Among them was this lady.'

'Prisoners?' cried Lopez; 'have they any others?'

'Two days ago,' said Rita, 'they brought several new prisoners.'

'How many?'

'Six.'

RING RUSSELL.

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'Who were they ?

'I don't know—foreigners.'

'Men or women ?

'Three of them were men and three were women. Some one said they were English.'

'English !' said Lopez, growing more excited still at this news, which was so much in accordance with his wishes—'English ! Tell me more about them.'

'Well, señor, of the men one was elderly ; the other two were young, quite handsome ; they looked rich, noble, proud.'

'Never mind. Now tell me about the women. Were they ladies ?

'Yes, señor, they were noble ladies, wealthy, high-born, proud. And one was elderly, and they said she was a great lady. And some said she was the mother of the young ladies, though they did not look like her daughters, nor did they look like sisters.'

'Tell me about them ; what did they look like ?

'One, señor, looked like a Spanish lady. And she was dark and beautiful and sad, with melancholy eyes. Never did the sun shine on a more lovely lady ; but her sadness always made me feel sad.'

Lopez interrupted her with an impatient gesture.

'Never mind her. Now describe the other one,' said he.

'The other ?' said Rita ; 'she looked like an English duchess. She was light—oh, a wonderful light blonde, with golden hair, and eyes as blue as heaven, with cheeks pink-and-white, and with dimples dancing on them, and with the smile of an angel that always lurked in her lips and laughed out of her eyes. And she was as beautiful as a dream, and no one ever saw her sad. Heaven does not hold in all its mansions a more beautiful, beautiful angel than this English duchess.'

Rita spoke enthusiastically ; the more so as she saw Lopez look at her with a deep attention, and a gaze that devoured all her words.

'That is she !' cried Lopez, in intense excitement. 'That is the one of whom I wished to hear. So you have seen her ? Ah, well, good woman, this information is your best passport—more, it is worth much to me. I'll reward you.'

'Oh, señor,' said Rita, anxious to strike while the iron was hot, and secure her freedom at once, 'if this information is welcome and valuable, the only reward I want is to let us go. Let us go, noble señor, for we have urgent business, and our detention here may be our ruin.'

'Ruin ?' cried Lopez ; 'what nonsense ! You are free now, and safe from the Carlists. As to letting you go, that is out of the question. You are the very woman I want to see. You

know all about this castle. You must be my guide back to it. I have been sent to recapture those unfortunate prisoners. I have been unable thus far to get on their track. As to that castle, there is a certain one up yonder which I had an idea of reconnoitring; but if all I hear is true, I shall have to get artillery. Now you have escaped, and you may be able to give me information of a very valuable kind. I should like to know how you contrived to escape from a place like that, and I urge you to be frank with me. Remember this, that the quickest way to liberty will be to help me to get those prisoners. You must remain with me until then. The sooner I capture them, the sooner you shall be allowed to depart.'

All this was a sore blow to Rita's hopes; but her quick mind soon took in all the facts of her position, and she concluded that it would be best to be frank, as the captain had urged. She also saw that it would be for her interest that the castle should be captured as soon as possible. And she knew, too, that a band of brave men, headed by a determined leader, could have no difficulty in capturing the castle by a surprise, if she should only make known to them the passage-way by which she had lately escaped.

Accordingly Rita proceeded to give to Lopez a full account of the way in which she had managed to effect the escape of herself and her companion from the castle. Lopez listened with the deepest attention, making her explain with the utmost minuteness the nature of the chambers and passages which she had traversed, and their position with reference to the rest of the castle; also the track down the sides of the chasm; its height, length, and width, and how far it offered concealment to those passing over it.

'My good woman,' said he, 'do not object to a little further detention. I assure you it need not be for more than twenty-four hours. After all, what is that? By this time to-morrow I shall have that castle in my own hands. It is of such infinite importance to me to capture those prisoners, that I assure you there is nothing I will not do for you, if you are faithful to me till I conclude this business of mine. So make up your mind to work for me in a cheerful, loyal, active way; and you will rejoice to your dying day that you ever met with Hernando Lopez.'

During this conversation, Russell, standing apart, had watched them attentively. Although unable to understand the words, he was able to gather from the faces, gestures, and tones of the two a very fair idea of their meaning. He could see that Lopez grew more and more excited; that the excitement was most intense, yet altogether agreeable; and that he himself was far, very far, from being the subject of that conversation. He could see that the effect produced upon Lopez was of the most desirable kind, and that the dreaded captain was now in a mood from which no

danger was to be apprehended. And therefore it was that the virtuous, yet undeniably timid Russell, began to pluck up heart. To such a degree was his late terror surmounted, that he now became conscious of a fact which had hitherto been suppressed under the long excitement of hurried flight and sudden capture ; and this fact was that he had been fasting for a long time, and was now ravenously hungry.

At length the conversation ended, and Lopez was about to turn away, when, suddenly, he noticed Russell. He raised his hat courteously as if to a lady, and Russell returned this civility with a most awkward bow. But Lopez did not notice this. He was in a pleasant frame of mind, and full of excited hopes.

'I hope,' said he with a polite smile, 'your ladyship will not be put out by this slight delay. Otherwise I am at your service.'

Russell understood this to be an offer of assistance, and, feeling secure in his disguise, he made a bold effort to communicate with the enemy. And this is the way he did it :

'Me hungry,' he said ; 'd—n hungry !'

'Hungria ?' said Lopez. 'Ah, a Hungarian lady ! Ah, true—I had forgotten. And so, Rita, your friend is a Hungarian lady ?'

'Yes,' said Rita, delighted at having her companion's nationality so conveniently disposed of. 'Yes ; she's a foreigner—a Hungarian lady, and no one can understand her language.'

'Very good,' said Lopez. 'It is all the same whether Hungarian or Spanish. She is a lady, and shall be treated as well as possible. And now, Rita, you must rest, for you must be strong and active for to-morrow's work.'

With these words Lopez showed them to their resting-place. It was in the loft, where Brooke and Talbot were confined. Here Rita ascended nimbly, and Russell followed, not without difficulty ; and soon Rita forgot her fatigue, and Russell his hunger, in a sound sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN WHICH RUSSELL MAKES NEW FRIENDS, AND TALBOT SEES NEW PERILS.

RUSSELL and Rita had thus been brought to the loft of the old mill, in which Brooke and Talbot were prisoners. It was fortunate for these latter that there had occurred this little episode of the arrival of new prisoners, for it served to give a diversion to their thoughts, turning them into a new channel, and relieving them from that intense excitement of feeling by which they had been overcome. It also gave them a subject of common interest apart from themselves ; and thus they were once more able to

converse with one another, without having that sense of violent self-restraint which had thus far afflicted them. Brooke was able to be lively, without any affectation of too extravagant gaiety, and Talbot was no longer crushed into dumbness.

They had seen the arrival of the prisoners from the window, and had watched them closely. The two fugitives had been captured close by the mill by the band of Lopez, just as that band was approaching the spot after a weary and useless day. The examination had been overheard by the two listeners in the loft, who were thus able to understand the meaning of the new turn which affairs had taken. After the prisoners had been brought up to the loft, their character and appearance still formed a field for ingenious speculation; and many were the theories hazarded by each, in turn, toward the solution of those points.

Morning at length came, and the prisoners awaked. Rita was first on her feet, and Brooke was able to read her whole character at a glance. He saw her to be a common sort of woman, with a bold face, piercing eyes, and ready tongue. He soon entered into a conversation with her, and learned from her exactly what she had already told Lopez. She also informed him that Lopez had detained her, in order that she might guide him back to the castle. This much Brooke had already gathered from what little he had overheard of the examination of the previous evening, and it gave him unmixed pleasure. For, although he had refused to violate his honour by acting as guide to betray the castle, he had no objection that others should do so. The fate of the castle and its Carlist occupants was in itself a matter of indifference to him. To be taken there would make an agreeable change for himself and Talbot. If Lopez should take them with him, it would be pleasant to go back with Talbot to that tower and renew the past; and although, for reasons already given, he did not feel like flying with her, still he felt that liberty would be better for both, and was ready to avail himself of any chance that might offer.

Brooke reported to Talbot what Rita had said, and while they were conversing, Russell awoke. Suddenly he detected, to his amazement, the sound of English words. The shock was so great that he was on the very point of betraying himself, and it was only by a strong effort that he maintained his self-control. Then, listening quietly, he understood the whole state of the case, as it had resulted from Rita's examination by Lopez.

Unable to sleep any longer, Russell roused himself, and slowly putting himself on his feet, walked to the window. His figure and movements at once struck the notice of Talbot, who drew the attention of Brooke to the strange and eccentric attitudes of the 'Hungarian countess.' Brooke scrutinized the good Russell closely, and expressed his opinions with great freedom, and a severe criticism followed, in which these two, safe, as they

supposed, in the ignorance of the foreigner, made very severe strictures upon Russell's whole *personnel*.

Russell, for his part, watched them as well as he could, and listened attentively, without being in the least offended. He could perceive easily enough that the priest was English and the other was American. He longed, in his helplessness, to take them into his confidence. He was not at all satisfied with his own relations toward Rita, and thought that if he could only trust these two, who were of his own blood, he might be safe. And yet he felt the need of caution. They might betray him. Like himself, they were prisoners, perhaps in a more perilous situation, and would not hesitate to sacrifice him if they could gain anything by it.

When he heard of the proposed return to the castle, he felt at first thoroughly dismayed. Farther thought, however, made it seem less dreadful, for he hoped that if Lopez were to capture the place and deliver Katie, his wrath might be appeased, and he might recover his hidden money; while, on the other hand, he perceived that if the worst came to the worst and his disguise was discovered, Lopez even then could not be more dangerous than 'his Majesty' had been.

There was something, however, in the tone and manner of these two, as well as in their general aspect, which gradually broke down the mistrust and reserve of Russell. He began to feel convinced that he might trust them, that his secret would be safe in their hands, and that they might give him valuable information and advice, if not assistance. Besides, he reflected that chances of escape might arise, and he thought that he would be safer in their company than in that of Rita. Finally, he came to the conclusion to trust them. But here he determined to go only half-way. He would tell them that he was English, but not an Englishman, and would leave farther disclosures to the chapter of accidents. If Lopez should discover this much and no more, there would be no danger, and he might conclude that he himself had made the mistake, since Hungarian and English were both alike unknown to him.

After careful observation, Russell also concluded that he would be safer if he addressed his confidences to the young priest with the sweet and gentle face. The other one looked less trustworthy, or at least less inclined to pity. Under these circumstances, therefore, and with this design, the good man began his advances, moving in a hesitating way toward them, with furtive glances, and with such very extraordinary gestures that Brooke and Talbot regarded him in great surprise.

'The Hungarian countess,' said Talbot, 'seems more eccentric than ever.'

Russell looked all around in a stealthy way. Rita's eyes were

fixed on him, but he did not care for that. He smiled at her, however, and nodded blithely, so as to disarm any possible suspicions, and then addressed himself to Talbot.

'Oh, sir!' said he, 'I'm not a Hungarian countess at all. I'm a poor unfortunate Englishwoman, that's escaping from the banditti, with the help of this good creature. And I know I can trust you.'

At this the amazement of Brooke and Talbot was inexpressible. Brooke, however, held his tongue, seeing that as Talbot had been addressed, it would be better for her to answer. So Talbot, after a few expressions of sympathy, asked Russell to explain farther.

Russell then informed them that her name was *Mrs. Russell*; that she had been captured, along with her daughter, by the Carlists; that she had escaped, hoping to get help to rescue her daughter. All this Russell stated, not without much circumlocution and contradiction.

Brooke now interposed.

'But don't you know,' said he, 'that these people are Republicans—that they're going to capture the castle, or try to? If they succeed, they will free your daughter. So you see you have fallen among the right sort of people, and you may be quite at your ease. It's all the best for you. If I were you, I would tell the captain all about it. Get yonder good woman, your companion, to explain.'

At this Russell gave a look of despair.

'The very thing,' said he, 'that I dare not do.'

'Why not?'

Russell then, still keeping up the part of *Mrs. Russell*, and mentioning Katie as her daughter, explained that Lopez was his bitter enemy, and told them about his love for Katie and his ejection from the railway-carriage.

'Well,' said Brooke, 'you needn't be afraid of him. This matter will settle itself. He'll free your daughter from captivity, and she'll marry him, of course. After that you can take the sweetest revenge on him by tormenting him for the rest of his days as his mother-in-law.'

Russell sighed a heavy sigh and turned away. As he did so, he caught the eyes of Rita, which were fastened upon him with a fixed, earnest, eager stare, and there was that in her look which served to drive away every other thought except the one that in this woman there was a new danger, more formidable than any which had yet menaced him. This look made him feel like an arrested debtor in the grasp of the bailiff, or like an insane man under the watchful eye of his keeper. In Rita he now recognised his bailiff and his keeper. She was worse. She had designs on him! And for what? For marrying him. Marriage was, of

course, impossible, for he had a wife already ; but did Rita know this ? To tell the truth, he had been fooling her ; and he now saw for the first time that he would have to answer for this. When she should discover it, what would she do ? He had heard the words of the poet :

‘ Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned,’

and he recalled these words only to shudder. He shuddered still more as he thought that Rita belonged to the Spanish race—a race that never forgives—a race implacable, swift to avenge—a race that recognises only one atonement for wrongs, and that is to wipe them out in blood.

Such were the thoughts of our honest friend, and they were painful in the extreme. They awakened new fears. That one look of Rita’s made him dread her more than Lopez, more than ‘ his Majesty.’ He began to think now, with something like pleasure, of going back to the castle. Lopez would protect him ; and if Lopez should fail, he would steal back by the secret path and surrender himself to ‘ his Majesty.’ He would find his bonds, and purchase his freedom with these. In addition to this, he determined to wait for a favourable opportunity, when Rita might be away, to confide to these new and sympathising friends the whole story of his woes.

Further conversation between Russell and these new friends was now prevented by the entrance of Lopez himself. He advanced to Brooke, and addressed him with much civility, not without friendliness.

‘ Señor,’ said he, ‘ I have been thinking over your case, and I have concluded to hand you over to my military superiors. They may take the responsibility of deciding about your guilt or innocence. But for the present, as I am responsible for you, I must detain you as my prisoner. If you were only connected with some recognised profession, I should be happy to accept your parole, and let you follow at your leisure ; but as you are considered here a possible spy, I cannot think of that. You must, therefore, come with us under guard. Moreover, as to your friend, this young priest, he must consider himself as bound, for a short time, with us. I expect to have need of him for a few days. I have nothing against him ; he is not a prisoner, but is detained merely for a purpose in connection with his sacred office. When that purpose is accomplished, he will be at liberty to go or stay.’

With these words Lopez retired. He had taken no notice of Russell, at which the latter felt a deep sense of relief.

Far different, however, were the feelings of Brooke, and of Talbot also, when he had translated to her the captain’s words.

‘ He has need of me,’ repeated Talbot, ‘ for a purpose in connection with my sacred office. Is that what he said, Brooke ?’

'Yes,' said Brooke, in a low voice.

'But what am I to do?'

Brooke led her away, out of Russell's hearing, and conversed with her in low whispers.

'Don't anticipate trouble, Talbot,' he whispered.

'But I must prepare myself for a possible emergency,' was the reply. 'Now what emergency can possibly arise?'

'The burial of the dead, perhaps,' said Brooke. 'They are going to attack the castle. Some will be killed. That's natural enough. Have you nerve enough to perform the burial-service?'

'I don't know,' said Talbot. 'I might as well try to command a regiment.'

'Oh, I'll show you the whole thing. All you've got to do is to read the burial-service out of the breviary. We'll practise it together. You need only pronounce the Latin like Italian. Do you know Italian?'

'No.'

'French?—'No.'

'Oh, well, you're an English priest, you know, and so you had better pronounce it like English. These devils will be none the wiser.'

Talbot was silent and thoughtful for a few moments.

'Brooke,' said she, at length, 'what were they saying about Lopez going to rescue an English girl, this—this person's daughter? This person, a—Mrs. Russell, said that Lopez was in love with the girl. You spoke about his rescuing her and marrying her.'

She hesitated.

'Well?' said Brooke.

'Well,' said Talbot mournfully, 'don't you see what I mean? and the use he wishes to make of me in my false character as priest?'

'By Jove!' exclaimed Brooke, as Talbot's meaning dawned upon him.

'You see, Brooke, I'm afraid that in my disguise as priest I may be required to marry this English girl to Lopez; and that is sacrilege—it is infamy—it is too horrible. I cannot—I will not. Never!'

At this Brooke was filled with consternation. He could only say something about the necessity of not anticipating evil, and express the hope that it might only be a burial. But Talbot felt that her fear was just, and that a new and unavoidable danger now arose before her.

In a short time after this the band set off, guided by Rita. Toward evening they reached a spot about a mile from the castle, where they secreted themselves in a grove and rested.

Evening came, and the moon rose. Then, as silently as possible, they went to the tower. Here arrangements were made for the security of the prisoners, and Rita prepared to lead the band through the secret way into the castle.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN WHICH, AFTER A SERIES OF SURPRISES, 'HIS MAJESTY'
GETS THE GREATEST SURPRISE OF ALL.

RETURN must now be made to the castle and the two young men whose duel had been interrupted. Captured thus, they stood for a time quite overwhelmed, their intense excitement now followed by a violent reaction, in the midst of which there was the appalling thought of the consequences which might flow from this. For Ashby to be found in Harry's room would surely lead to the discovery of everything—the secret passage-way, the sliding-door, and, perhaps, their visits to the ladies. Each one thought of this for himself. Each one had believed that the Carlists did not know about the secret passages. But now all was over.

'Well,' continued 'his Majesty,' speaking in Spanish, 'business before pleasure. We will examine you both about this to-morrow. For the present we will leave a guard in this room. Meanwhile, Señor Rivers, you may hand over that pistol; or stay—no—you have put it to such a noble use that you may keep it: one pistol against six men need not be feared. And now, gentlemen, adieu till to-morrow.'

With these words 'his Majesty' retired, securing the door behind him, and Harry and Ashby were left with the guards. They stood apart from one another, pale, anxious, and each wrapped up in his own thoughts. For all that had happened each blamed the other, and thus their mutual hate was only intensified.

The cause of 'his Majesty's' appearance upon the scene can be easily explained. He had been greatly troubled in his mind by the 'ghost' in Mrs. Russell's room, and could not account for it. He had not thought of any secret communication, for, being a comparative stranger here, he had not known of any. Thinking, however, that he might get some light on the subject, he had wandered to the door of Harry's room, and there the sound of voices had arrested his attention. Knowing that Harry was placed there in solitary confinement, he felt that the clue to the mystery might now be here; and so, gathering half a dozen men, he had come in upon them as above described.

Leaving this room, 'his Majesty' now went once more to the

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once more to the

room of Mrs. Russell, in the hope of gaining more light yet. Upon entering, he was once more nearly overthrown by the impetuous onslaught of the irrepressible Mrs. Russell, who, at this new and unexpected advent of her royal lover, overwhelmed herself and everybody else with her joyous vociferations. This, however, 'his Majesty' endured with truly royal dignity, tempering kindness with firmness, and dealing gently with her weak woman's nature. Katie was there, but the royal eye, on wandering about, noticed the absence of Dolores.

'Whatever's become av the señorita?' he asked.

Mrs. Russell gave a startled look around.

'What! Where is she? She's gone!' she screamed; 'she's gone! Oh, your Gracious Majesty, the ghost! the ghost! Save me!'

'Whisht! Howld yer tung!' said 'his Majesty.' 'The ghost, is it? So he's come an' carried off the señorita! Well, I've found the ghost.'

'Found the ghost!' gasped Mrs. Russell.

'Mesilf has. Begorra, it's the truth I'm tellin'. Do ye know his name?'

'His name?' gasped Mrs. Russell, once more thinking of her late terrible fancy.

'Yis, his name; ye can't guess it? No? Well, I'll tell yez. It's Ashby.'

'Ashby! Mr. Ashby!' cried Mrs. Russell. 'Why! how could he get here?'

'Oh, well,' said 'his Majesty,' 'he did get here, an' that's no loie. How he got here I'll find out to-morrer. But he did get here, an' he's been here since, an' by the same token he's sperited off the señorita. But there's two av them.'

'Two of them!' repeated Mrs. Russell, in wonder.

'Ay, two av them; an' the other's that young blade Rivers!'

Katie, thus far, had not said a word. She heard of the discovery of Ashby with surprise, but with no deeper feeling. The moment, however, that the name of Rivers was mentioned she gave a gasp, and her head fell forward on her hands.

'His Majesty' noticed the action. He put his own interpretation upon it. But he said not a word that had any reference to it; he was too cautious for that. And surely in this 'his Majesty' showed a skill and a discrimination which was most politic, and well worthy of the royal ruler of millions. More than this. One glance showed him how the land lay with Katie; so our monarch, not content with abstaining from all further allusion to Harry, actually carried his complaisance—or, if you please, his diplomacy—so far as to try to appease all possible anxieties that might arise in Katie's mind.

'Shure the two lads meant no harrum at all at all,' said 'his

Majesty.' 'They happened to find a way to get here, an' they came here, an' begorra they'd have been fools if they didn't. Shure to glory, there's no harrum in life in comin' here on a bit av a visit. An' ther's no wondher that a young man 'ud come here, wid such charrums as these to invite him. Shure it 'ud be enough to call the dead back to loife, so it would. An' if they've run off wid the señorita, all I can say is, they can't go far; an' the señorita will have to come back again; so she will:

' 'Tis to visit my Nancy I go,
Through bushes an' briers an' sineis;
For Nancy has bothered me brains,
An' I've taken French lave av me sinsis.''

'And wasn't there any ghost at all?' asked Mrs. Russell, to whom this information had given inexpressible relief.

'Well,' said 'his Majesty,' 'there's no knowin'; an' it's best to be on yer gyard, so it is, for sorra a one av us knows whin a ghost may be prowlin' round about, an' there ye have it. As for the other ghosts, Ashby an' Rivers, they won't do yez any more harrum—they're undher gyard.'

'Under guard!' said Katie, and threw an imploring look at 'his Majesty.' It was almost the first time that he had fairly caught her eye, so dexterously had she always avoided his glance.

'Well,' said 'his Majesty,' 'they're none the worse for that—not a bit. Av all r'y'l atthributes none is so thruly majestic as the atthributes av mercy, and makeniss, an' maguanimeetee. These are the shuprame atthributes av r'y'lty, an' eminintly characterize our own r'y'l character, so they does. So the young lads may whistle for all av me—an' sorra a harrum shall harrum thim.'

At this Katie threw toward 'his Majesty' a glance of gratitude unspeakable, which sank deep into the royal soul.

'An' now, ladies,' said he, 'I must infarrum yez that afther the ayvints av this noight, I doesn't considher this room safe for yez at all at all. Shure it's loike a public thoroughfare, an' it's a gathering-place an' rendezvous for min an' angils, ghosts an' hob-goblins, an' all manner av ayvil craytures. So the long an' the short av it is, I have to infarrum yez that I'm going to move yez out av this the morrer, an' have yez put in another room where there won't be nothin' in loife to harrum yez, where ye'll have more comfort combined with safety thin ye've had here.'

This remark made Katie reflect. The worst had already happened—the discovery and arrest of Harry. After that she could not hope to see him again. She did not wish to leave the room; but as Harry's visits were now at an end, she could not see that it would make any difference. But Mrs. Russell had a great deal to say.

'Oh, how grateful!' she cried in her most gushing manner; 'oh, how deeply grateful I am to your Gracious Majesty! It's so kind, so thoughtful, so considerate, and so true. Oh, what can I ever say or do to express my gratitude! Only, your Gracious Majesty, do not leave me now! Leave me not—oh, forsake me not! This room is a place of horrors. It is a haunted chamber. When you are here, I have no fear; but when you are gone, then I am overwhelmed. Oh, your Gracious Majesty, forsake me not! Leave me not! Oh, leave me not, or—I—shall—die.'

Against such an appeal as this the gallantry of 'his Majesty' was scarcely proof. He threw a tender glance at Katie, which, however, was not perceived, and then said:

'Shure to glory, if it's afeared ye are, why that's a different matter, so it is. I didn't intend to move yez away this noight; but if yez are afeared, why, there's no reason in life why yez shouldn't go off now to the other room.'

'Oh, take me away!' cried Mrs. Russell; 'take me away, your Royal Majesty—take me with you!'

'Shure it's meself that'll take both av yez, if ye wish it, whiniver ye say the worruld,' said 'his Majesty.' 'An' remember, there's the crown av Spain, an' the power, an' the glory, an' the dignity, an' the pomp, an' the splindur av the Spanish throne, all to be had wid a wink av one av your lovely eyes, so it is. Remember that.'

'Ah sire!' said Mrs. Russell languishingly. 'Oh, your Gracious Majesty! Ah, what shall I say?'

She had taken it all to herself, and in the most open way; while Katie didn't take it at all. 'His Majesty' saw this, and determined to be more direct.

'Well,' said he, 'ye see——'

But at this moment a wild yell sounded forth from without, with sudden and appalling fury. It burst upon their ears, from the stillness of midnight, with terrific violence, chilling the very blood in their veins. Then came the rush of heavy feet, the clatter of swords, the explosion of firearms, the shouts of many voices:

'Hurrah for the Republic!'

'Down with the Carlists!'

Mrs. Russell gave a long, piercing yell, which drowned every other sound, and flung herself into 'his Majesty's' arms.

'His Majesty' tore himself away.

'What's that?' he cried. 'It's an insurrection av the populace, so it is. We'll go off an' mate thim.'

With these words he rushed out of the room.

The ladies were left alone, and listened in terror to the uproar. Up from every side there came the shouts of men, the tramp of rushing feet, the clangour of trumpets, and the thunder of fire-

arms. Far on high from the battlemented roof ; far down from the vaulted cellars ; without, from the courtyards ; within, from unseen chambers, came the uproar of fighting-men. There was a wild rush forward, and another fierce rush backward ; now all the conflict seemed to sway on one side, now on another ; at one time the congregated sounds would all gather apparently in one central point, then this would burst and break, and with a wild explosion all the castle, in every part, would be filled with universal riot. Then came the clang of arms, the volleying of guns, the trampling of feet, the hurrying, the struggling, the panting, the convulsive screaming of a multitude of men in the fierce, hot agony of battle.

In the midst of this the door was flung open, and 'his Majesty' burst into the room. His apparel was all disordered ; his face and hands were blackened with powder and stained with blood. He appeared to have been in the thickest of the fight. He burst in, and instantly banging to the door, he fastened it on the inside. 'We're betrayed !' he cried. 'It's the enemy ? We'll be captured ! We'll be executed ! All's lost !'

At this Mrs. Russell flung herself into the royal arms. 'His Majesty' had by this time grown so accustomed to this that he accepted it with resignation as part of the misfortunes of the hour, and merely heaved a sigh.

But they were roused by the thunderous blows upon the door. Massive though that door was, it would soon be beaten in by such blows as those.

'We're lost !' cried 'his Majesty.' 'Is there any way out ? Shure some av yez know,' he asked eagerly. 'Ye know,' he said earnestly to Katie, 'the way—the way *he* came—Rivers !'

'His Majesty's' position was desperate. At such an appeal Katie could not be unmoved.

'Save me ! Show me the way,' repeated 'his Majesty.'

Katie said nothing. She hurried toward the fireplace. 'His Majesty' followed. Mrs. Russell still clung to the royal person. Katie pointed up the steps to the opening.

'Is it there ?—begorra, mesilf never knowed it or suspected it

He seized a torch that lay in the fireplace, and sprang up into the opening. Then he lighted it.

'Aren't you going to take me, your Sacred Majesty ? Oh, leave me not !'

'Be jabbers !' cried 'his Majesty,' 'I'll baffle thim yet : yis, ladies—I'll help yez—come along, thin.'

Mrs. Russell came first ; Katie then followed. Katie's motive in following was nothing in particular, but several in general. In the first place, she was afraid of the fighting-men bursting into the room ; in the second place, she naturally clung to the fortunes of her auntie ; and finally, she had a vague idea of meeting with Harry.

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Thus the two ladies followed, while 'his Majesty' went ahead, carrying the torch. At length he came to a place where the stone opened into the passage-way. It had been left open by Ashby. This place seemed to 'his Majesty' to lead in a more favourable direction, and accordingly he turned in here. Then he descended the steps, and finally reached an opening. He stood here and listened. The room below seemed empty. He descended, requesting the ladies to wait a few moments. On reaching the room, he perceived that it was closed. The door had not been opened. Ashby was not there, of course, as 'his Majesty' knew; but 'his Majesty' was not a little surprised at seeing Dolores. There was no chance for her to hide, so she stood looking at him. But her face was pale, and sad, and frightened.

Before a word could be said, Mrs. Russell scrambled down, and came clinging to 'his Majesty.' Katie followed, and in great amazement saw Dolores. She at once ran up to her, put her arms around her, and kissed her.

'I might accuse this señorita of high treason,' said 'his Majesty,' 'but what's the use?'

'Oh, sire, spare her!' said Mrs. Russell. 'Remember, that mercy is majesty's darling attribute.'

'Bedad it is,' said 'his Majesty.' 'Whoever says it isn't? And you, señorita,' said 'his Majesty' to Dolores, in Spanish—'you seem to know the secret ways here.'

'Yes.'

'Why did you come here?'

'I fled here.'

'His Majesty' smiled.

'Oh, I understand; but don't fear me. I wouldn't harm you—though this does look like treason. Still, answer me frankly, do you know any other secret passages?'

'I know them all.'

'Will you help me to escape?'

Dolores hesitated.

'You need not hesitate; if you don't help me I'll kill you. No, I won't kill you—I'll kill Ashby. He's in the hands of six of my guards. I've only to give the word, and he'll be shot. Quick, now—what do you say?'

'Will you let me go free?' asked Dolores.

'Well,' said 'his Majesty,' 'under the circumstances, I think I will consent to let you go free. Oh yes; only show me the way out, and you may do as you choose.'

'Then I will show you,' said Dolores. 'But, first, will you tell me in what room Señor Ashby is confined?'

'No,' said 'his Majesty'; 'get me out first, and then I will let you know all you wish.'

'Very well,' said Dolores.

She led the way up into the passage which they had left. Mrs. Russell followed close upon 'his Majesty's' heels. As for Katie, she did not move.

Follow? Why should she? It was quiet here, and the immediate fear of the armed men no longer impelled her away. Should she leave the castle? Not she. The castle seemed to be captured by some enemy. This enemy must be the soldiers of the government. In that case she ought by all means to stay. Besides, she knew that Harry was still here, and to escape without him was not to be thought of.

The consequence was that Katie remained behind. It was very dark; but that made no difference, as she had grown accustomed to the darkness since she had come here. True, the moonbeams glimmered through the narrow windows, but the greater part of the room was sunk in gloom. She thought for a moment of trying to persuade her 'Auntie' to remain; but the next instant she reflected upon the infatuation of 'Auntie' about 'his Majesty,' and concluded that it would be useless to say a word. And therefore 'Auntie' went off, leaving Katie alone, seeking the crown of Spain, and the throne, and sceptre, and power, might, dominion, pomp, splendour, and majesty—will-o'-the-wisps all of them, my beloved readers, in search of which I'm afraid poor 'Auntie' will come to grief.

Dolores led the way, followed thus by 'his Majesty' and 'Auntie.' At the top they came to the stone door-way, which was still open. This Dolores closed carefully. Then she pressed against a stone which was on the opposite side of the chamber. It yielded, and opened in just like the other. Passing through, they all found themselves in a chamber like the last, only it ran in a different direction. Here Dolores closed this door as carefully as before.

From this chamber another passage-way led. It is not necessary to detail here the way by which Dolores led them. Suffice it to say that it was long, tortuous, and constantly descending by means of many steps. Several stone doors had to be opened. To one less familiar than Dolores, all passage through would have been impossible, and 'his Majesty' came to the conclusion that he could never find his way back, if ever he wanted to come. He said as much to Dolores.

'It's easy to learn,' said she. 'The plan on which it is arranged is so simple that a child can understand it when once it is explained; but you never could find it out for yourself.'

'Very likely,' said 'his Majesty.' 'It's the way with most riddles.'

They continued on, until at last they came to a place at which Dolores, after pushing the rock, stood and listened. There was a sound, outside, of rushing water.

Then, pushing at the rock again, it opened. The torch-light shining out disclosed a cavern, at the mouth of which this passage-way thus opened. A brook bubbled along in front. Opposite was a precipice. Above was the sky, where the moon shone. They were at the bottom of the deep chasm.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW LOPEZ AGAIN MEETS WITH KATIE, AND HOW KATIE
SHOWS NO JOY AT HER DELIVERANCE.

KATIE remained, as has been stated, in the lower room, which had been Ashby's place of imprisonment. She was not long left alone : soon she heard the noise of footsteps. There was nothing in this sound to alarm her, however, and so she waited quite calmly, thinking that the new-comer might be more friendly than the last, and that this new turn of affairs might improve her position. The door opened, and a man entered in the dress of an officer, while behind him there were visible soldiers in the uniform of the Spanish army. These men carried torches. The first comer also had a torch, which he held high above his head as he stared about and peered through the gloom. At length he caught sight of Katie, and, with a cry of joy, advanced straight toward her. It was not until he had come close to her that Katie was able to recognise Lopez.

'Why, Captain Lopez!' she said, in excellent Spanish ; for her Spanish connections, and life in Spain, had made her as familiar as a native with that language. 'I never was so amazed in my life. I never heard that you were here ; why haven't I seen you before ?'

Lopez paused for a moment in surprise at Katie's words, and still more at her manner.

'I've only arrived this instant,' said he, 'and I've come here to save you from these brigands, and congratulate you and myself on my good fortune in finding you. The other ladies I cannot find. I hope, señorita, that you have not suffered much while here a prisoner in the hands of these ruffians ?'

'Oh, no,' said Katie.

'This room is not fit for you,' continued Lopez, 'and you shall at once be removed to a more comfortable apartment.'

Such a proposal as this was by no means agreeable to Katie, who liked the idea of the secret passage, and did not wish to go out of reach of it.

'Oh, do not take me away from here !' said she. 'I assure you I prefer this room to any other. In fact, I am quite attached to it.'

Lopez laughed.

'Really,' said he, 'I had no idea that a prisoner could become attached to such a gloomy dungeon as this. Ah, señorita, you are jesting. I assure you, however, that there are better rooms than this in the castle, and in a few minutes you shall be taken to one. You shall also be provided with proper attendants; for there are women about the castle who can wait on you.'

Lopez was so earnest and determined that Katie saw plainly the uselessness of any further objections, and therefore murmured a few civil words of thanks.

Lopez looked profoundly disappointed. He had come in the glory of a conqueror—more, of a deliverer; to free Katie from the hands of a remorseless tyrant; to break in pieces her chains; to snatch her from the jaws of death. He had expected to see her on the verge of despair; he had fully counted on being received by her in wild and eager excitement, almost like a messenger from Heaven. It was upon all this that he had counted, as he had toiled to effect her rescue. His task had been by no means light. Fortune had favoured him, or else his toil would all have been unavailing. His rescue of her in so short a time was therefore very near the miraculous. And now, as he came to her, after all his efforts, after all this brilliant success, with these hopes and expectations, he found his arrival greeted in the coolest manner, and treated as the most commonplace thing in the world. More than this, instead of finding Katie languishing in her dungeon, he found her actually unwilling to leave it, and pretending that she had an 'attachment for it.' Of course, all this was pretence and affectation, yet still there was something underneath which Lopez could not quite comprehend. For the present he could only conceal his deep disappointment and vexation as best he might, and arrange his plans for the future.

After retiring for a few minutes, he came back with a woman. This was one of the women who had been captured, and was now allowed to remain on condition of service, the particular service required of her being merely attendance upon Katie.

Lopez here had a fresh disappointment. He had seen Katie's solitary state, and thought that by bringing her an attendant he would give her pleasure. But to Katie the presence of any attendant was exceedingly distasteful. It was like having a spy set over her. It was bad enough to be taken away from within reach of those secret passages, but to be afflicted with this attendant and spy was too much.

Lopez noticed her slight frown and her downcast look. He was surprised once more, and more disappointed than ever.

'And now, señorita,' said Lopez, 'if you are quite ready, I

will show you the way to the new room, where you may stay so long as you remain here.'

'Very well, señor captain,' said Katie quietly.

'If you have any luggage, it shall be sent up to-morrow.'

'Thanks, señor.'

Upon this Captain Lopez went out with the torch, and Katie, with her attendant, followed. She noticed, as she went, that there were marks of great confusion in the castle; some men were bound, others lying wounded, with women weeping over them; others, again, in the Spanish uniform, were lolling about, drinking and carousing.

Katie followed Lopez upstairs, and here in the upper hall there were the same signs as below, though the crowd of men was not so great nor so noisy. Passing through this, they came to a third stairway, which ran up from one side of this upper hall and led into a passage-way higher still. Here Lopez opened a door, and, on entering, Katie saw a room which was smaller than those below. One or two mats were on the stone floor. There was a couch at one end covered with skins, and at the other a large chest. The room bore marks of having been recently occupied, and Katie thought that perhaps the occupant had been 'his Majesty.'

The windows here, of which there were several, were narrow slits like those below; and a hasty glance showed Katie that they looked down into the courtyard. This, however, gave her no consolation. It was a matter of indifference now where she was. Having been taken away from the neighbourhood of those friendly passage-ways, all other places seemed equally objectionable. Her discontent and dejection were evident in her face, though she made no remark.

'I am sorry,' said Lopez, 'deeply sorry that I have nothing better than this room to offer; but I hope that before long we shall be able to leave the castle.'

Katie did not hope so, and, in fact, did not know whether to hope so or not. All would depend upon circumstances. And as she did not know how circumstances were, and was not willing to ask, she did not know what to say now; so she simply said the very non-committal words:

'Thanks, señor.'

Lopez could tell pretty well why she said no more than this. It was because she felt dissatisfied about something in connection with her rescue—but what that something was he could not conjecture. That was the mystery which baffled him. However, he had sense enough to see that his own best course was to leave her to her own devices, and not annoy her by ill-timed questions. So he prepared to depart.

'Señorita,' said he, 'this woman is your attendant. If you

are afraid to be alone, she will sleep in the room with you ; but, if you prefer it, she will not.'

'Oh, I should so very much prefer being left alone, Captain Lopez !' said Katie hurriedly.

Lopez looked surprised.

'Oh, very well,' said he ; 'but I thought you were so timid that you would prefer having some one.'

'Oh no—thanks ! I'm not at all timid,' said Katie.

This was a new surprise to Lopez, who had believed Katie to be the most timid young lady living. But he said nothing more. He merely wished her good-night ; and, having directed the attendant to leave, he locked the door after him and went away, a deeply disappointed and a deeply meditating man.

Katie sprang to the door, held her ear close, and listened till the footsteps had died away. Then she hurried back. Her quick eye had noticed the fragment of a wax-candle on the floor, in a corner. Some matches were lying loosely about, which had evidently been used by 'his Majesty' to light the royal pipe. With one of these Katie lighted the candle, and surveyed the apartment once more.

There was a fireplace here, deep, but not so high or large as the others before mentioned. This Katie examined first. Alas ! she saw nothing. The chimney ran straight up, and not an opening appeared.

After this she retreated dejectedly, and examined no farther.

CHAPTER XL.

IN WHICH THERE SEEMS SOME CHANCE OF A TRIANGULAR DUEL.

HARRY and Ashby, transformed from bosom friends to mortal enemies, now occupied the same room, but with an armed guard to prevent further intercourse. Such intercourse was, however, more effectually prevented by something far more powerful than any armed guard—namely, by mutual hate, and by the consciousness that their hostile meeting, though interrupted, had not been terminated. It had only been deferred ; and yet again, at some future time, they must meet and settle this quarrel. Even this prospect, however, important though it was, did not by any means form the most important part of their thoughts as they stood thus apart absorbed in themselves. Each one turned his thoughts rather to the events which had last occupied him before they had encountered one another ; and so, while Harry wandered in fancy back to Katie's room, Ashby was taken up with tender reminiscences of Dolores.

In the midst of such sentimental meditations, they were

startled by the sudden outburst of that loud alarm and wild tumult already mentioned. In an instant they both were roused out of their abstraction, and brought back to the stern realities of life. The guard, too, were roused, and, springing to their feet, they stood waiting for orders. But after a few minutes the uproar became so tremendous that the position of the guards grew unendurable, and they went to the door and tried to open it. This they could not do, for it was fastened on the outside, so that departure from the room by that way was not possible; yet the sounds which came to their ears were sufficient to inform them of the whole truth, and tell them that the castle had been surprised by an attacking party, which was evidently victorious.

The longer they listened the plainer did this become, and from this there arose the inevitable conclusion that they—that is, the Carlist guard—were prisoners. Upon this, restiveness and uneasiness began to be visible among them, and a dread of their coming doom from the hands of merciless enemies quite demoralized them. They exchanged looks of terror; they looked wildly around to see if there were any chances of escape; but to their eyes the stone walls, the stone floor, the narrow windows, and the vaulted roof offered not a chance of escape, or even of a partial concealment.

As for Harry and Ashby, they passed in one instant from depths of despair to the highest hope. They recognised the shouts and the watchword of the Republic, and felt that in the hands of the soldiers of the government they would be safe.

Suddenly the door was opened. Outside were armed men with blazing torches, from among whom there advanced into the room an officer. The Carlists were immediately disarmed, and their arms taken outside. But the officer took no notice of them. His eyes, searching on every side, soon perceived Harry and Ashby, who had drawn near.

‘Señor captain,’ said Harry, ‘I rejoice that you have come to save us from captivity and death. We have been here as prisoners for two or three days, and an immense ransom was exacted from us, which we could not pay. Had you not come, we should undoubtedly have been shot.’

Ashby said not a word. He had recognised Lopez at a glance, and dreaded the worst from this vengeful enemy. Lopez kept his eyes fixed on Ashby as he spoke, though he addressed Harry.

‘Señors,’ said he, ‘I am glad that I have come in time to avert so horrible a crime. You, señor,’ he continued, addressing Harry, ‘may retire: you are free. You will be respected and protected by my followers, and may either go, or remain till our return to Vittoria. As for Señor Ashby, I wish to have a brief conversation with him.’

At this Harry bowed, and with some further expression of gratitude went out of the room a free man, his heart swelling with exultation and joy and hope.

'Señor Ashby,' said Lopez, 'we have met again.'

Ashby bowed.

'Señor Ashby,' continued Lopez, 'insults have been given and received on both sides, and we are already under engagements to have a hostile meeting. Is it not so?'

Ashby bowed again. Lopez had spoken these words in a low tone, which was inaudible to his men. He now turned and ordered them to withdraw, and stand outside until further orders. They obeyed.

'Señor Ashby,' he continued, 'the lady is here for whom we both are seeking. It was about her that our quarrel arose.'

'I am ready now,' said Ashby.

'For the quarrel?' said Lopez. 'Ay—but I am not;' and he gave a bitter laugh.

'A man of honour,' said Ashby scornfully, 'will always be ready.'

Lopez again gave a bitter laugh.

'Dear señor,' said he, 'I have had too many affairs to be afraid of risking my reputation as a man of honour by postponing our little meeting. I have other things to attend to first. And first I must have a little leisure to get rid of that bitterness and gall which you, señor, with your English superciliousness, have poured into my heart. For a time you had your hour of triumph, and I was made to feel by you all the insolent superiority of a man of wealth over a man of the people. But now, señor, our positions have changed. I have the power, and you are nothing. Even your wealth will not save you; for while you are my prisoner all the gold of Mexico will be unavailing to deliver you until I choose.'

Ashby had now a sudden thought that his position was very peculiar and very unenviable. He had just quarrelled with his best friend, and had just been saved from murdering him, for the sake of a girl whom he had ceased to love (or whom he believed he had ceased to love, which was the same thing just then); and now here was another of Katie's numerous lovers, full of love and jealousy—the one as strong as death, the other as cruel as the grave; which lover was evidently now regarding him as a tiger regards his helpless victim, and was playing with him for a time, so as to enjoy his torments before devouring him. These thoughts passed through his mind, and he had nothing to say.

'Señor,' said Lopez, 'our quarrel was about that young lady, and our meeting may take place at any time. For the present, I have to say that if you will consent to give up all claim to her

hand and leave the castle, I will send you at once with a sufficient guard to any place you name, or to the nearest station. But if not, then I shall be under the painful necessity of detaining you.'

'May I ask,' said Ashby, 'upon what ground you propose to detain me?'

'Certainly,' said Lopez. 'I arrest you as a spy.'

'A spy!'

'Certainly. What are you doing here? You were seized by the Carlists, it is true, but what of that? You may have betrayed your party to them. I find you coming North on no good or reasonable errand. You certainly were following that party—as a spy, or something like it—in your private interests. I am therefore at liberty to arrest you as a spy, perhaps in league with the enemies of Spain. It is a charge of which I can prove you guilty, and for which you will be shot.'

'And that is a gentleman's satisfaction!' said Ashby with a sneer.

'Gentlemen,' said Lopez, 'obtain satisfaction in many ways. It will give me no small satisfaction, for instance, to know that you are here while I urge my suit for the young lady's hand, for which I have the good wishes and co-operation of her guardian. It will give me no small satisfaction to inform you when, as she surely will, she grants me her consent; and, finally, the highest satisfaction of all will be afforded when I request your presence at our wedding—a compliment which, I am sure, señor, you will appreciate. For, señor, we shall be married here, and immediately, since I have brought a priest with me, so as to put the whole matter beyond the reach of accident.'

Having fired off this heavy shot, Lopez watched to see the effect upon his victim. Ashby showed not the slightest emotion. Neither in face nor in gesture did he evince any agitation whatever; nor in his voice, for he said, in a perfectly cool and indifferent way:

'Very well, señor. I can do nothing against all that.'

Lopez felt disappointed. He had expected to see agonies depicted on his helpless victim, and to exult in the sight. But he concluded that this was owing to Ashby's 'English phlegm,' and that he was thus preserving, like the Indian at the stake, a proudly calm exterior, while really suffering torments of hidden pain.

'Since you are so calm,' said Lopez again, 'perhaps you will consent to purchase your freedom by formally relinquishing all claim to that young lady's hand. That is the shortest way of regaining your liberty, and it will be quite satisfactory to me.'

Lopez spoke this in an ironical tone, taunting Ashby thus on his cool demeanour. Now, the giving up of all claims to Katie

was in itself so far from being repugnant to Ashby, that, as the reader knows, he had already virtually renounced her, and formally, too, by word of mouth to Dolores. But to do this to Lopez was a far different thing. It would, he felt, be base ; it would be cowardly ; it would be a vile piece of truckling to an enemy, who would exult over it to the end of his days. The idea could not be entertained for a moment.

'Señor,' said Ashby, with his usual coolness, 'you are well aware that, apart from all other considerations, your proposition could not be entertained for a moment by a man of honour.'

'Perhaps not,' said Lopez ; 'but I had to make mention of it, merely as a form, and not supposing that you would entertain it.'

'I am in the hands of fortune,' said Ashby ; 'I'll take my chances as they come.'

Upon this Lopez said nothing more, but, with a formal adieu, took his departure. Ashby was left with the six unarmed Carlist prisoners.

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW THE UNHAPPY RUSSELL FINDS THE DANGER OF PLAYING WITH EDGE-TOOLS.

WHEN Lopez, with the assistance of Rita, had burst into the castle, he had left his prisoners in the tower in the charge of a couple of guards, these prisoners being Brooke, Talbot, and Russell. During the attack on the castle there was a time in which Russell might very easily have escaped. The two guards were eager to join the *mêlée*, and as their instructions had reference principally to Brooke and Talbot, they paid no attention whatever to the 'Hungarian lady.' They knew that Rita had done an act for which the captain would reward her, and concluded that the 'Hungarian lady' was a friend rather than a prisoner. Under such circumstances escape would have been easy enough to Russell, had he been bold enough to attempt it.

Yet, after all, how could he really escape ? To go back over the same road would be only to encounter fresh perils, perhaps worse than any with which he had met hitherto. To go in any other direction would be simple madness. There was, therefore, no other course open to him than to remain where he was.

After a long time some of the men came back, at the command of Lopez, with orders to bring the prisoners into the castle. The guard obeyed and followed, taking with them Brooke and Talbot. Russell was about to accompany them, and was just

hesitating as to the path, when suddenly he found himself confronted by Rita, who had just come up.

'H-s-s-s-sh!' she said. 'All is safe. I haf my reward. The captain haf pay me. Now we shall go. Alla right. Come!'

Russell felt a strange sinking of heart. As to going away with her, that was not to be thought of, and he only sought now for some plausible excuse.

'I—I'm too tired,' he said; 'I'm worn out, Rita. I cannot walk.'

'Bah!' said she. 'Come—you shall not go far; I take you to where you shall restar.'

'But I'm tired,' said Russell. 'I want to rest here.'

'Bah! you not too tired to go one-two mile; that not mooch to go. Come!'

'I can't,' whined Russell.

'But you will be captar—you shall be a preesonaire—you shall be deescovaire—all found out by the capitan; so come—fly, you haf no time to lose.'

'I can't help it,' said Russell, in despair. 'If I'm caught again I don't care. I'm worn out.'

'But you moos!'

'I can't.'

'Come—I shall carry you; I shall lifta you, and carry you to your safetydom. Come!'

'It's impossible,' said Russell, who, in addition to his fear, began to feel vexation at this woman's pertinacity.

There was something in his tone which made Rita pause. She stood erect, folded her arms, and looked at him. The moonlight fell on both. Each could see the other. Russell did not feel pleased with her appearance. She looked too hard—too austere. She seemed to have an unlimited possibility of daring and of vengeance. He began to think that he had been playing with edge-tools, and that in trying to make use of Rita he had only gained a new master for himself. The vague fears which had been gathering through the day now grew stronger, and he realized his full danger.

'You not want to fly? You not want to 'scape?' said Rita, with a frown.

Russell thought it best to own up.

'Well, n-n-no,' said he. 'On the whole, I do not.'

'Why?' asked Rita, in a hard voice.

'Oh—well—I've—I've—I've changed my mind,' said Russell in a trembling voice.

He began to be more afraid of Rita than ever.

'Ah!' said Rita. 'It is so—very well. Now leest'n to me: look at me. What haf I done? I haf betray my maestro—I

haf betray my friends; this castle is took; my friends are run away, many of them dead; their bodies are over there—they are dead. Who kill them? I—I, the traitor! I, the Judas! I betray! And why? I betray—because you tempt me! Do you know that? You tempt me! You ask me to helpa you! you promise me all the world! I helpa you! I make myselfa traitor, and now it haf come to this!

'Where are my friends?' continued Rita. 'Gone! fled! dead! They sall haunt me—their ghosts—they sall call for venganza; and I haf make myself a traitor to the friends that lose me an' was kind! See me, what I am! You haf make me to this—you! you! you! What! do you think I sall let you turn false to me? No! nevaire! You sall be true to me—what-evaire! You haf promis to gif me all the world. You haf promis to gif me you'selfa. You sall be what you say—"my man!" I sall haf the recompensa, if I die from remordimiento. If you be a traitor to me, I sall haf the venganza!'

During this wild harangue Rita seemed transported to fury—she seemed a madwoman. Russell trembled in every limb from sheer terror. He never had in all his life seen anything like this. His only hope now was to escape from her insane rage, ne matter under whose protection.

At length she stopped and grew calmer. Then she said, in a low, stern voice:

'Now—will you come? Will you fly?'

Russell shuddered more than ever. Fly? Not he! She might tear him to pieces, but he would never fly with her. Fly? Why, it was impossible! He might, indeed, fly from her; but as to flying *with* her, that could not be thought of.

He shrunk back, trembling in every limb.

'I can't,' he said—'I can't; I'm too weak—I'm old—and weak and worn out.'

'But I say,' continued Rita impatiently, 'that I sall take you to a place where you sall restar.'

'I can't,' said Russell.

'Do you intendar to keep you promeese?'

'What promise?' said Russell hesitatingly.

'To marry me,' said Rita coldly.

'Marry you! I never said that,' replied Russell.

'You did.'

'I did not. I have a wife living—you know that, surely. She is in the castle.'

'She? Bah! She is dead. I know that,' said Rita triumphantly.

Russell shuddered more than ever. Dead! dead! he thought. What a thought of horror! And how? Was it this woman that did the deed—this fiend from the robbers' hold—to make

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'Dead, I tell you! dead! She is dead! Aha! you think me fool, simple, aha! But I know, I know to take car' of the number one! Aha! how you like that, meestaire? And now leest'n,' continued Rita. 'You not fly? Very well. You sall come to the castle. You sall stay with the capitan. You sall tell him all—I tell him all. He shall judge and decidar. Come! come! You sall not stay here. You sall go and restar your old bone.'

Rita motioned to him sternly to follow, and Russell obeyed. He was not at all disinclined to move in this direction, since it led him to the friendly protection of the castle. It was with uncommon vigour and nimbleness that he followed his tormentor down the steep side, and across the brook at the bottom, and up the other side. Rita noticed this, and said scornfully:

'You too weak to go one-two mile on the level groun', but you strong enough to descendar and ascendar these cliff. But wait, old man—remember if you falsa mi I sall haf my venganza. Now you go and spik to the capitan, and you see what he sall do for you.'

Rita said no more, but led Russell along until they reached the castle. There Russell seated himself on the stone floor among the soldiers, feeling safer here than anywhere, while Rita went away. Russell supposed that she had gone in search of Lopez to tell her own story first.

He was right. Lopez had been very busy, but Rita was able, after all, to obtain a hearing from him sufficiently long to enable her to plead her cause in her own way. She told Lopez all.

Now Lopez was under great obligations to Rita, and was ready to do almost anything for her. At the same time, he was the bitter enemy of Russell. Here there was an opportunity open to him to evince gratitude and to obtain vengeance. He appreciated the situation most fully. He promised Rita that he would do whatever she wished.

'I only wish one thing,' said Rita: 'make him keep his promise.'

'I will,' said Lopez.

'Will you make him marry me?'

'I will,' said Lopez. 'I have a priest here. I have brought him here, for I expect to be married myself to a lady whom I have long loved in vain. I have rescued her from those foul brigands, and she will not now refuse me. And I promise, Rita, that you shall be married to your dear one at the same time that I am married to mine, and by the same priest.'

Upon this Rita was voluble in the expression of her gratitude. Lopez now went to seek out Russell. He found the good man wearied and worn out. He led him away to a room that happened to be the very one in which he was confined before. Brooke and Talbot were both here. Russell entreated Brooke to intercede for him with Lopez. Lopez saw the action and understood it.

‘What does he want?’ said Lopez.

Russell then explained, through Brooke, what Lopez had already learned through Rita, namely, that he was Mr. Russell, and that Rita was claiming his fulfilment of a promise which he had never made, and could never fulfil—first, on the ground that Rita had not freed him; and, secondly, on the more important ground that he was already married. To all this the answer of Lopez was brief and stern.

‘She did free you,’ said he, ‘for you are now out of the power of the Carlists, and may be your own master on the performance of your promise. Moreover, as to your being married already, Rita assures me that your former wife is dead.’

At this Russell groaned.

‘She is not dead,’ he said.

‘Oh, well,’ said Lopez, ‘I don’t care. Rita is willing to run the risk.’

Russell now pleaded for Katie’s sake. But this roused Lopez to worse anger.

‘If you were merely a cruel father,’ said he, ‘I would forgive you for her sake; but you are a guardian, and not over-honest, as I believe. She has no love for you. She never wishes to see you again. Nor do I. You are nothing to her. She is nothing to you. You have made your bed, and must lie on it. You must blame yourself, and not me.’

With these words Lopez retired, leaving the unhappy Russell in a condition that may be better imagined than described.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN WHICH DOLORES REAPPEARS IN THE ACT OF MAKING A RECONNOITRE.

HARRY had already been set free, but Ashby was held as a prisoner. At first he remained in the room where Lopez had found him, along with the Carlist guard, but after a few hours he was removed to another chamber. This was chiefly to prevent any possible attempt at escape which Ashby might make with the assistance of the other prisoners, who, knowing the weak points of the castle, might be able, with a bold leader, to strike an effective blow for liberty.

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The moonbeams now were streaming in upon the stone floor where the six Carlist prisoners were lying. They were sound asleep, and their deep breathing was the only sound that might be heard. Two of them were in the bed, the other four were on the floor. But these men were used to roughing it, and on the flinty pavement they slept as soundly as on a bed of down.

Suddenly, in the neighbourhood of the chimney, there was a slight noise. No one in the room heard it, for they were all sleeping too soundly. The noise ceased for a time; then it was renewed. It was a rustling, sliding sound, as of some living thing moving there. After this the noise ceased. There was another long pause. Then came a whisper—'*Assebi!*'

No one heard. The sleepers were all far away in the land of dreams. The whisper was repeated: '*Assebi!*'

There was no answer. Nor did any of the sleepers awake. Out of such a sound sleep nothing could awaken them that was of the nature of a mere whisper. Of course this moving body was our friend Dolores. There is no need to make a mystery of it. She alone now had access to this room; she alone would come here. She alone, having come here, would utter that one word, '*Assebi!*'

It was Dolores. She had come back to this room to seek after Ashby—to see him; if not, then to hear of him, and, if possible, to help him. After assisting 'his Majesty' to effect his royal escape, Dolores had thought for a few moments of surrendering herself. After further thought, however, she had concluded not to. She saw that nothing could be gained, and much might be risked by such an act. The knowledge which she had of all the interior of the castle gave her an immense advantage so long as she was free; and until she saw how things were it would be better for her to remain free. There would be great danger in confiding too readily. She knew that the Republicans were no better than the Carlists, and perhaps these were merely a rival band of the same ferocious marauders. Ashby, being a foreigner, was perhaps in as great danger as ever; and if so, she should preserve her freedom, so as to be able to help him.

This was a very sensible decision; but as Dolores was a very sensible girl, and a very brave one too, it was only natural that she should have decided in this way. After waiting until the noise in the castle had ceased, Dolores approached the room and reached the place of descent. Here she waited and listened. She heard the deep breathing of the sleepers. By this she knew that several men were now in the room. But was Ashby there? She could not tell. That he was not asleep she felt sure. He would be expecting her, at any rate; and that would serve to keep him awake. She determined to try still further. So she

began, as cautiously as possible, to make the descent. She succeeded in doing this without awaking any of the sleepers. For a while she stood in the deep, impenetrable shadow and surveyed the apartment. She saw, where the moonbeams fell, the outline of figures on the floor and on the bed. The remoter parts of the chamber were hid in gloom. Then she called, in a low and penetrating whisper, '*Assebi!*'

There was no answer. Dolores now felt sure that Ashby was not there; but in order to make assurance doubly sure, she repeated the call. There was still no answer; and now Dolores felt certain that he had been taken away.

Once more she determined to satisfy herself as to the people who were in the room. It was a hazardous thing to do, but it had to be done. She must see. She had matches in her pocket. She resolved to throw a little light on the subject. She struck a match. The flame burst forth. Holding it above her head, Dolores peered into the room. The flame illumined the whole apartment. A second or two was enough to show her the whole. There were six men. They were Carlists. They were prisoners. Ashby had been taken away.

So much was plain enough. Ashby was not there. He had been removed—but how? That was the question, and a most important one. Was he free, or was he still a prisoner? This must be ascertained before Dolores could decide anything. It was not a question to be decided by mere conjecture. It was certainly possible that the captors of the castle, finding these prisoners held captive by the Carlists, had released them all; and if so, it was all very well; but Dolores knew the suspicious nature of her countrymen, and felt very much inclined to doubt whether they had set the prisoners free upon the spot. They were foreigners, and she knew that Spaniards of every party would consider that a sufficient excuse for detaining them.

The only way in which she could satisfy her curiosity and decide upon her own future course was by communicating with these Carlist prisoners, and learning the truth from them. But how? They were sleeping so soundly that something louder far than any ordinary cry would be needed to reach their ears. To call to them would, therefore, be useless. Some other way would have to be adopted. But in what way? That was the question that Dolores had now to answer. There was only one way. A risk must be run. It could not be helped. She would have to rouse them, and the most effective way, as well as the one most inaudible to those without, would be to venture into the room and rouse them in some way by touch. A rapid view of all the risks of the case made her resolve to encounter them. She felt able to awake the sleepers without being discovered, and quickly made up her mind.

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Gliding swiftly and noiselessly to the nearest sleeper, Dolores caught his hair, and giving it a sudden, violent pull, she darted back as quickly, before she could be discovered.

It was effectual.

The sleeper started up with a violent oath, and began abusing his comrade. This one also awakened, and a fierce altercation went on between them, wherein the one charged the other with pulling his hair, and the other denied it with oaths. In the midst of this Dolores had ascended into the passage-way, and stood there waiting for a chance to be heard. At length the noise subsided, and the two began to settle themselves for sleep, when Dolores, seizing the opportunity, called out, in a low but clear and distinct voice :

'Viva el Rey!'

The Carlists heard it.

'What's that?' cried one.

'Some one's in the room,' cried the other.

'Viva el Rey!' said Dolores once more, in the same tone.

At this the two men started to their feet.

'Who goes there?' said one, in a low voice.

'A friend,' said Dolores.

'Where?' asked the man, in surprise.

'Come to the chimney,' said Dolores.

The two men went there, till they reached the fireplace.

'Where are you?' asked they.

Dolores did not think it necessary to tell them the truth just yet.

'I'm in the room above,' said she. 'I'm speaking through an opening in the flue. I can help you, if you will be cautious and patient.'

'Who are you?'

'A prisoner. I know the way out. I can help you. Be cautious. Is the English prisoner with you?'

'No,' said the Carlist, wondering what sort of a prisoner this could be, and why this prisoner asked after the Englishman.

Dolores questioned them further, and the men told all they knew. They had overheard the words that had passed between Ashby and Lopez, and told what they had heard.

From these Dolores gained new light upon the facts of the case. Having been a witness to the scene in the station at Madrid, she at once perceived that this enemy of Ashby's could be no other than that man in civilian dress, but of military aspect, with whom he had had the quarrel, who had been forced to leave the carriage of the Russells. This man had travelled in the same train. He had been captured, plundered, and then set free with the other Spaniards. Dolores conjectured that he had obtained some soldiers, surprised the castle, and freed

Katie. She also felt that Ashby was now a prisoner once more, in the hands not of a mere robber, but of his bitterest enemy.

Thus the whole truth flashed upon her mind.

But where was Ashby?

That she could not tell as yet. She could only hope, and make plans.

'Can we come up to you?' asked the Carlists.

'No,' said Dolores. 'Besides, there's no escape here. I can come to you, and I will do so before long. Do not sleep too soundly. Do not wake the others. Be ready to act when I come.'

The men readily promised this.

'But why can't we go now? why can't you help us now?' they asked.

'We can't go away from this,' said Dolores, 'without the English prisoner. But with him we shall surely escape; so be ready to act when I give the word.'

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW KATIE FEELS DEJECTED, AND HOW LOPEZ FEELS DISAPPOINTED.

THERE is no need to enlarge upon Katie's feelings, as she sat in her lonely chamber, buried in thoughts which were both sweet and painful. We all know perfectly well what they must have been, for we all understand about that sort of thing. We've dreamed love's young dream, you and I, haven't we? and so we'll let this pass. As for Katie, I'm afraid she must, in her short experience, from all appearances, have dreamed a great many of love's young dreams; but never among all her dreams or waking thoughts had she known a sadder or more sorrowful hour than the present. Even her soul—volatile, buoyant, and lively—found it impossible for a time to rally. She sat with clasped hands and bowed head, looking careworn, dejected, and utterly miserable; and it was in this state of mind that Lopez found her on the following morning.

He felt again disappointed (in fact, Lopez was apparently always feeling disappointed), though why he should feel so is somewhat singular, since Katie would have been more than human, or less, if she had shown a joyous face in such a situation.

Lopez gave a sigh by way of salutation. Katie did not look up, but knew perfectly well who it was and what he wanted.

'I hope you have found this room more comfortable than the last,' he began at length, after the usual salutation.

'I'm sure I don't see what comfort one can expect in such a place as this,' was the reply.

'I'm sorry that I haven't anything better to offer,' said Lopez; 'anything that is in my power to grant I will do for you.'

'Those are merely idle words,' said Katie. 'There is one thing, and one only, that I wish, and that you can give; that one thing you have no right to keep from me, and yet it is useless to ask you for it.'

'Useless—oh, do not say that! Tell me what it is.'

'My freedom,' said Katie earnestly.

'Freedom!' said Lopez; 'why, you are free—free as a bird!'

'Yes, as a bird in a cage,' was the bitter reply.

'Ladies must always be under some restraint,' said Lopez; 'otherwise, you are perfectly free.'

'This, sir,' said Katie hotly, 'I consider insult; it is nothing less than mockery at my distress. Is it freedom to be locked up in a cell and cut off from all my friends?'

Lopez gave a gasp. He was anxious to please Katie, yet this was a bad, a very bad beginning.

'Why,' said he, 'where can you go?'

'You will not even let me go about the castle,' said Katie. 'If you barred your gates, and let me move about inside, even then it would be imprisonment; but you lock me in this cell, and then you come to mock me.'

'Great Heaven!' said Lopez. 'Oh, señorita! won't you understand? Let me explain. This castle is full of rough, rude men. It would not be safe for you to move about. They are not trained servants; they are brutal and fierce. If you went among them you would be exposed to insult.'

'My attendant comes and goes,' said Katie; 'she is not insulted. Why may I not be at least as free as she is?'

'Because,' said Lopez, 'you are a lady; she is only a common woman. Things would be insults to you which she only laughs at. I cannot allow you to expose yourself to the brutal ribaldry of the ruffians below. If a father had his daughter here, he would lock her up, as I do you, out of affection.'

At this Katie turned her head away, with the air of one who was utterly incredulous, and felt the uselessness of argument.

Lopez was silent for a few moments. Then he went on.

'Listen,' said he, 'and see if you have reason to be angry with me. Let me tell you some little of what I have done. But for me, you would still be a prisoner in the hands of a remorseless villain, a common brigand. Listen to me, I entreat you, and then tell me if you are right in blaming me. As soon as I was freed I hurried on to Vittoria, the nearest military station. I had but one idea—the rescue of you from the hands of those villains. At Vittoria, after incredible effort, I succeeded in

getting a detachment of men from the commandant. With these I set forth on the following morning, trying to find my way to you. It was an almost impossible task. The country, never thickly inhabited, was literally deserted. I could find no one to ask, and could find no trace of your captors anywhere. I did, however, what I could, and sought everywhere most painfully and perseveringly. At length, just as I was beginning to despair, chance—the merest chance—threw in my way a couple of fugitives. These, fortunately, were able to give me the information I wanted. One of them knew all about this castle, and knew that you were here. With this help I was able to find my way here. And now I was once more favoured by the merest chance. Had I tried to capture the place in a regular fashion I should have been driven back, for this castle is impregnable, except to artillery; but my guide knew of a subterranean passage-way, and guided me through this into the courtyard. Once here, I found all the men in a careless condition, and made a rush upon them before they could get their arms. Over and over again I risked my life in the fight that followed, while pressing forward in my eagerness to find you before they could get you off. I found you at last. I was full of joy and triumph at the thought of rescuing you from a loathsome captivity. Judge of my surprise and bitter disappointment when I saw you so indifferent, when you met me so coolly; and, instead of showing gratitude, seemed rather angry at me than otherwise.'

Lopez paused here to see the effect of his eloquent speech.

Katie looked up.

'It was not captivity, as you call it,' said she; 'and if it was, it was not loathsome. That word, señor, is far more applicable to my present condition.'

'You don't know,' said Lopez. 'You can't understand. You must have been under some fatal misapprehension. Is it possible that you were ignorant of the character of your captor—a mere brigand—one who pretends to be a Carlist, merely that he may rob passengers, or capture them and hold them to ransom? Have you been all this time in such ignorance?'

'No, señor; I knew in whose hands I had fallen—he is a man of honour!'

'A man of honour!' cried Lopez, in amazement.

'Señor, you cannot know yet who he is. I must tell you. He is the King of Spain—his Majesty King Charles!'

'Don Carlos!' cried Lopez.

At this information he stood transfixed with amazement. Nothing was more probable than that Don Carlos had been in the castle, though he did not suppose that Don Carlos would rob travellers or hold them to ransom. And then there came

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upon him the bitter thought of all that he had lost by the escape of this distinguished personage. Had he captured him, he would have been certain of immortal glory—of advancement, of high command, honour, wealth, everything which a grateful government could bestow. And all had slipped out of his hands by the narrowest chance. The thought of that lost glory well-nigh overcame him.

'I didn't see him,' he groaned, as he stood clasping his hands in an attitude of despair. 'He must have left before I came.'

'He left,' said Katie, 'while you were in the castle.'

'Ah!' said Lopez, 'how do you know that?'

'Because,' said Katie, 'I saw him when he left.'

'But you were in that room. How could he leave that room?'

'I saw him when he left,' said Katie, 'that is all. You need not believe me unless you wish, but it is true.'

Lopez had to believe her.

'And what is more,' said Katie, 'you will not remain here long. He will soon be back.'

'Pooh!' said Lopez, 'he can do nothing. He can't get in here. This castle is impregnable to anything less than an army.'

'But you got in.'

'But I've guarded that passage so that others cannot,' said he.

'Do you think,' said she, 'that there are no other secret passages than that?'

Katie had drawn a bow at a venture. She knew from the statements of Dolores that there were secret passages all about; but whether there were any others that ran out into the country outside she did not know. Still, she thought she would try the effect of this on Lopez. She was fully satisfied with the result of her experiment.

Lopez started and stared.

'Other secret passages!' he said. 'Do you know of any?'

'If I did I would not tell,' said Katie.

Lopez was much disturbed. He did not know but that there really were other secret passages. The escape of 'his Majesty' seemed to point to this. He determined to institute a thorough search.

'I'll find out every passage in the castle before evening,' said he.

Katie smiled. She did not believe that he would find one.

Lopez felt nettled at her smile.

'You don't believe I shall find them,' said he. 'If I don't find them I shall conclude that they are not there.'

'A very safe conclusion!' said Katie.

Lopez felt angry. He had come hoping to make an impres-

sion on Katie by telling her of his love and devotion. In this he had been miserably disappointed. He had become angry and excited. He was no longer in a fit mood to appeal to her feelings, and he felt it. He therefore concluded that it would be best to retire for the present, and come again after he had grown calmer.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW LOPEZ HAS ANOTHER CONVERSATION WITH KATIE, AND FEELS PUZZLED.

It was not much more than an hour afterward when Lopez paid Katie a second visit. By that time he had overcome all his excitement, and had settled upon a plan of action of a different kind. It was of no use, he saw, to appeal to Katie's feelings, and so he thought that he would try the effect of a little pressure of a moral character.

'I hope you will pardon me,' said he, 'for troubling you again, but it is necessary for us to understand one another, and I think you do not see exactly how I am situated.'

At this Katie made no observation, but drew a long breath, and leaned back with the air of a martyr. This was excessively aggravating to Lopez, but he managed to smother his irritation, and proceeded :

'Pardon me, señorita, if I have to recall the past. I saw you, as you remember, some months ago for the first time, and found you not unwilling to receive my attentions. From the first moment of my acquaintance with you I loved you, and thought that I had reason for hope. Lovers are always sanguine.'

'I can assure you, señor,' said Katie, 'I do not see how you could have found any reason to hope in this case.'

Lopez felt this rebuff very keenly, but kept his temper.

'I was merely speaking of my own hopes,' said he mildly, 'and you certainly were far more amiable than you now are.'

'I'm sure, señor, I should be sorry to be otherwise than amiable, but sleepless nights and solitary confinement must necessarily affect one's temper. I can only say I do not wish to be rude.'

'Pardon me—rude? That is impossible,' said Lopez, grasping eagerly at this as at some small concession. 'I only want you to give me now a fair hearing. Let me say, once for all, that I loved you then, and have loved you ever since, most devotedly.'

'I suppose I have to listen,' said Katie, 'as I am your prisoner; but I will only hint that before speaking of love it might be as well to set me free.'

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Lopez drew a long breath. It was hard indeed for him to keep down his anger.

'Very well,' said he, taking no notice of her words. 'In the midst of my hopes there came this English Ashby, and at once I felt that I was pushed into the background. I bore my disappointment as well as I could, and in addition to this I put up with things of which you never knew. That man had a most insolent manner. He was wealthy. He was purse-proud, and excited universal hate by his overbearing ways. There was always the clink of gold in his voice, and even in his step. I have even received insults from him.'

'Why did you put up with insults?' asked Katie. 'I thought that no Spaniard ever allowed himself to be insulted.'

'For your sake,' said Lopez, in a tender voice. 'For your sake I endured all.'

'For my sake! I am at a loss to see why you should allow any one to insult you for my sake.'

'Ah! there were many reasons why I had to be very, very patient for your sake. In the first place, I saw that you preferred him to me, and I feared that if I quarrelled with him you would hate me; and that would have been worse than death. Again, if I had quarrelled with him, you would have been known as the cause, and would have been talked about; and in Spain it is a great dishonour to a young lady to be talked about. But do not suppose that I would have allowed him to insult me with impunity. No; a day was to come for a settlement, and he knew it. When we left Madrid we had agreed upon a meeting.'

'I didn't know that,' said Katie carelessly.

Lopez was struck with this careless tone with regard to a matter which affected the life of Ashby: for it was hardly possible that Ashby could have come unharmed out of a mortal combat, but he took no notice of it.

'Such,' said he, 'was the state of affairs up to the hour of our journey. Then the train was stopped, and I moved heaven and earth to follow you and effect your rescue, with what success you perceive; for here I am, and this castle is in my hands.'

'I must protest,' said Katie, with much dignity, 'against your using such a word as "rescue" with reference to me. I consider that I have been seized and thrown into prison. I do not wish to be unkind; I merely say this in justice to myself, and also to "his Majesty" the King, of whom I was merely the honoured guest, with plenty of friends around me.'

At this Lopez was struck dumb with vexation. Never could Katie be brought to look upon his really gallant and daring exploit in its proper light. And yet he could not disprove her assertion. He did not know what had been her position here.

If the King had really been here, it was, after all, quite possible that she had been, as she said, an honoured guest.

"His Majesty," said Katie, in a calm and placid tone, 'was most attentive. He did his utmost to alleviate our dulness. He paid us constant visits, and assured us over and over again, that our stay was to be but short. Never have I met with one who was more kind, more considerate, and at the same time more lively. Always laughing and cheerful, he seemed more like some well-known friend than the great king of a great country. With us he forgot all the cares of his situation. He was gallant, chivalrous—more, he was even pleased to be merry, and to indulge in many little pleasantries. And now you perceive, Señor Captain, what the real change in my situation has been. It has been from sunshine to gloom; from laughter to tears; from bright and pleasant society to loneliness and despair.'

This was putting it strong—very strong indeed, and Lopez felt it in his very soul. He at once gave up any further efforts in this direction. He had nothing more to offer in answer to such a statement as this. He felt it to be a fact that Katie had been happy before he came, and that she was now miserable. Whatever the cause was, there was the unanswerable fact.

He now adopted a severe tone.

'You are aware, señora,' said he, 'that when I captured this castle there were several prisoners.'

Katie nodded.

'I suppose so,' said she. 'I don't know.'

'Very well. Among them was your dear friend——'

'My dear friend? Who? Not "his Majesty?"'

Lopez laughed bitterly. 'How transparent that little trick is,' he said to himself.

'By "your dear friend,"' said he, 'I mean, of course, Mr. Ashby.'

'Mr. Ashby! Oh!' said Katie.

To tell the truth, by this time Katie had almost forgotten his existence. She seemed to herself to have lived years since last she spoke to Mr. Ashby. So she said, in an indifferent tone,

'Mr. Ashby? Oh!'

Lopez, of course, thought this a part of her assumed indifference, and smiled at his own penetration. He could see through her little arts; and he knew something which would soon force her to tear away her mask.

'He is arrested as a spy,' said Lopez abruptly.

'A spy!' said Katie; 'Mr. Ashby a spy! Why, he hasn't been a spy. I don't understand.'

'Whether he is one or not,' said Lopez harshly, 'will soon appear, as he will be tried by court-martial to-day. In times like these no mercy is shown to spies. The country is swarming

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'Still,' said Kat's, 'I don't see how you can make out that Mr. Ashby is a spy.'

Katie showed no horror at all, no excitement whatever, and Lopez was proportionally amazed. He had not expected this.

'I can't tell,' said he; 'the court-martial will deal with him. I dare say he is a spy, and I fully expect that he will be shot.'

'Well,' said Katie, 'I dare say he must be. You seem to hate him so, and you say he has insulted you, so you will take this way of being revenged. All the same, I shouldn't like to deal that way with my enemy. Poor Mr. Ashby! It's very, very sad! Oh, what would "his Majesty" think, if he were to hear this!'

Once more Lopez was struck dumb. He had counted with certainty upon producing a strong effect on Katie. By holding Ashby's doom over her head, he hoped to influence her. But this tremendous blow had fallen, and had evidently not been felt. For Ashby and for his fate Katie had nothing but the most commonplace expressions of pity—no horror, no grief, no despair, nothing of the sort.

In fact, so completely overcome was Lopez by this unexpected result of his interview with Katie, that he left abruptly.

He was full of wonder. 'Is it possible,' he thought, 'that this is her English stubbornness? Can she have so much of that infernal English stolidity as to be able to conceal so perfectly her deepest feelings? Impossible! Does she love Ashby? She cannot! Does she love anybody? No! Can she love? I don't believe it! What a girl! what a girl! And she seems so gentle, so timid, but in reality she's as bold as a lion, and as fierce as a she-tiger. By heavens! she shall be mine, if she's the Evil One himself.

'And that poor fool Ashby thinks she loves him! Bah! she cares no more for him than she does for me. The idiot! This is a sweeter vengeance for me than anything else. And, by heavens! he shall still be present at our marriage. For married we shall be, in spite of Fate, even if I have to gain her consent with the muzzle of my pistol against her brow.'

CHAPTER XLV.

IN WHICH HARRY ASKS A FAVOUR, AND LOPEZ BEGINS TO SEE A LITTLE LIGHT.

WHILE Lopez was thus chafing and fuming, he was accosted by Harry. Harry's position was peculiar, and not particularly enviable. He had been informed that he was a free man, and

master of his own actions. Lopez had nothing against him, and by this time had forgotten even his existence. After his deliverance, Harry had gone mooning about, stared at by all in the castle, until at length he had fallen asleep.

In the morning he made a great discovery. This was the fact that his freedom to go was useless, and that he was still a prisoner here—a prisoner, though a voluntary one—a prisoner bound to this place by bonds stronger than iron manacles or walls of stone. These bonds were the feelings which had started up within him before he was aware, and now held him fast tied to Katie. He awoke to feel that his present freedom was far less sweet than his late captivity—that delightful captivity with its stolen interviews, and the sweet thoughts of her who was so near.

And where was she now? He had seen nothing of her. Had she fled? But how, and why, and where would she have fled from him? Had she been captured? But why? Who would capture her? Yet where was she? These were the questions that came thronging upon him to vex his soul and destroy his peace; so that it was for the purpose of finding out something definite about her that he had sought out Lopez.

He looked pale and agitated. Lopez, preoccupied though he was, could not help noticing this, and he thought that Harry must be suffering from anxiety about his friend Ashby. This, however, he immediately found, from Harry's first question, to be a great mistake. Harry was far from suspecting the state of mind in which Lopez was—how full of love and jealousy and suspicion; how at that very moment he was eager to penetrate into the secret of Katie's heart. In fact, Harry suspected nothing at all, and so was not at all on his guard, but blurted out all his feelings.

'Captain Lopez,' he began, 'did you see a young English lady here last night—a Miss Westlotorn?'

'Yes,' said Lopez.

'Did you? Is she— Did— Is—is—is she in—in the castle?' stammered Harry, in distress and deep agitation.

There was not one expression on Harry's face nor one tremor in his faltering voice that was not instantly marked by Lopez. There seemed in this to be some clue to the mystery.

'She is in the castle,' said Lopez.

'Where—when—where?' said Harry excitedly. 'I've been looking for her everywhere. I've gone over the whole castle. I hope she isn't hurt! Is she safe? Did she fall into the hands of the soldiers?'

'She fell into my hands,' said Lopez bluntly.

Harry fastened on him a look of devouring anxiety.

'Did you—is she—what did—when—that is—is she safe?'

'She is safe,' said Lopez.

Harry drew a long breath. 'You see,' said he, with a little more composure, 'I have felt anxious about her. I have been worried, you know, and I have felt anxious about her—in fact, you know, I have felt anxious about her.'

'She is kept out of the way just now,' said Lopez, 'on account of the riot in the castle, and the dread we have of an attack. I don't care about letting the men know she is here.'

Harry drew a breath of relief.

'I'm glad,' he said.

Another sigh followed. 'Then he looked wistfully at Lopez.

'Would it be too much to ask—if I were to ask—if you would present me—to—to pay my respects to her, as an old friend?'

'Impossible, señor,' said Lopez. 'She is with the women; you couldn't visit her. You will be able to pay your respects to her after she reaches Vittoria, or some other place of safety. Until then it is impossible. As for yourself, I hope you are comfortable; and whenever you wish to go you may go.'

Harry sighed, and stood as one in a dream.

'I think,' said he, 'I shall not go—just yet. Perhaps I may wait till the rest are going.'

'Good-morning, señor,' said Lopez, walking away.

Harry stood rooted to the spot.

As Lopez walked off, he felt that he had got hold of something which might be used against Katie. 'Another'—he said to himself—'another poor fool who has become infatuated, like myself; but now the power is mine, and I will use it. Yes; perhaps she herself may feel toward this man something of what I feel toward her. If so—if so—I'll drag the secret out of her. But, by heaven! that poor fool is standing there yet. There's a mad lover for you! Ha, ha! Is he any worse than I have been? Let me see. Suppose I had been taken prisoner as he has been, shut up with her in a castle, then freed; would I not long to see her? Would not liberty be useless without her? That man can't leave his prison-house. She is here—she is here; that's enough. Yet what is she to him? Is not this man Ashby's friend? I saw them meet at the hotel in Burgos as I watched Ashby. They greeted like brothers, and went off together for the night. And *he*—why, he has fallen in love with his friend's betrothed! his friend's—ha, ha!—betrothed—ha, ha!—and, by Jove! why not? That girl could make a saint fall in love with her. That girl—why, she oughtn't to be allowed to go at large, and therefore I've shut her up; and shut up she shall be for the remainder of her days, like a good Spanish wife. But I must have a few more words with my moonstruck lover.'

With these thoughts Lopez sauntered back to where Harry was standing, fixed upon the spot where he had left him.

'Pardon, señor,' said he, 'but it seems to me that you take a deep interest in the señorita. May I ask if she is a relative? In that case some allowance might be made: she might not object to see a relative.'

'Oh,' said Harry eagerly, his whole face gleaming with joy, 'she will never object to see *me*. Ask her; ask her. She will be delighted to see *me*.'

At this there were two distinct feelings struggling for the mastery in the breast of the Spaniard; one was exultation at the ready way in which Harry had fallen into his trap; the other was one of jealousy at Harry's easy confidence. He had never felt such confidence at finding a welcome reception from Katie. However, he was now on the right track, and he determined to follow it up.

'Are you a relative of the lady's?' he asked.

'Well no—not exactly a relative,' said Harry.

'Ah! perhaps a connection by marriage?'

'Well, no—not exactly a connection, either——'

'Well, you see, señor, in Spain etiquette is very strict, and our ladies are under more restraint than with you. I must treat this lady in accordance with my own feelings, and a Spanish gentleman would feel as if he were slighting a lady if he were to act out of accordance with Spanish etiquette.'

'Oh,' said Harry earnestly, 'she is an English lady.'

'But I am a Spanish gentleman.'

Harry drew a long breath. He was in despair. Oh, how he longed to be Katie's third cousin for a few minutes!

'I am very sorry,' said Lopez; 'but you see I have to be guided by my own sense of propriety. I suppose you are a very old friend, señor; yet I have been quite intimate with the señorita myself, and never heard her mention your name.'

'Well,' said Harry, 'I have not known her *very* long.'

'She used to speak freely of all her English friends,' continued Lopez; 'for you see she had not many, having lived so long in Spain; and so I was surprised to hear you speak of her as so intimate a friend.'

'Well,' said Harry, 'my acquaintance with her is not of *very* long standing.'

'You were not acquainted with her at Madrid?' said Lopez.

'No,' said Harry dreamily.

'Nor at Cadiz?' continued Lopez.

'No—not Cadiz.'

'Then, señor, you could only have made her acquaintance on this journey,' said Lopez, with a smile, which was not merely

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Harry looked confused.

'Well, you see, señor, in captivity, or on a journey, people are very much thrown together, and they make friendships very fast.'

'Oh yes,' said Lopez, 'I understand. In short, it amounts to this, that one day of such intercourse, so free, so unconventional, is equal to a whole year, or even a whole lifetime, of the formal intercourse of ordinary social life. Well, señor, I am sorry. I came back thinking that you might be some near relative or connection. My own ideas and habits do not allow me to permit what you ask; but the señorita will be her own mistress in time, and then of course she can see whom she chooses.'

And now, for a second time, Lopez walked away, thinking that he understood all. 'Another victim,' he thought. 'And in two or three days: in that time she has turned his head. And does she return his passion? Is she as indifferent to him as she is to me, and to Ashby? I will soon find out.'

CHAPTER XLVI.

IN WHICH LOPEZ MAKES A FRESH ASSAULT, AND KATIE BREAKS DOWN UTTERLY.

ONCE more Lopez called upon Katie; it was about two hours after his last call. This was his third call in one day. She looked surprised and also vexed.

'A little matter has occurred to me,' said he, 'which I thought I would mention to you, as it ought to be of some concern to you.'

'Ah!' said Katie languidly, as Lopez paused. She seemed to be more indifferent, if possible, than ever; more self-absorbed, and more bored with his society.

'It's about a certain Mr. Rivers,' continued Lopez.

It was not without very careful premeditation that Lopez had entered upon this interview, and the result of his thoughts was that he had decided upon introducing this matter in the most abrupt manner possible. But in all his speculations as to the possible effect of this new scheme, he had never imagined anything like the reality as he now witnessed it.

At the mention of that name Katie's manner changed instantly and utterly. From languor, from indifference, and from boredom, she started up erect with wild excitement and terrified interest. In her face there was a perfect anguish of fear and apprehension. Her eyes stared upon him in utter horror; she gasped for breath, and it was not until some time that she could articulate a few words.

'Mr.—Mr.—Rivers!' she gasped. 'Did you say—Mr. Rivers?'

However amazed Lopez was at Katie's intensity of excitement, he made no reference to it, and answered in a quiet and matter-of-fact tone.

'He said he was acquainted with you, and wanted to see you.'

'To see me? Mr. Rivers?' said Katie, still agitated. 'And can—can he—will he—will you let him? Did you consent?'

'Well,' said Lopez, 'you see, there were reasons——'

'Reasons!' repeated Katie, all tremulously, and in dire suspense—'reasons!' She waited his reply breathlessly. The thought of Harry being in the power of Lopez, of the hate and malignant vengeance which Lopez might pour forth upon his devoted head, had all occurred to her at once at the mention of his name, and still overwhelmed her.

'In Spain, you know,' said Lopez, 'there is not such freedom of social intercourse between young unmarried ladies and gentlemen as in England, and I did not think that you would feel like violating our Spanish etiquette.'

'Spanish etiquette!' cried Katie, with nervous eagerness; 'oh, that is nothing. Tell him he may come—he may come; tell him he may come—I shall be most happy to see him—I shall be so glad to see him! I shall—oh, I shall—be—I shall be—oh yes, glad to see him!'

Katie was struggling with intense feeling. Her feelings carried her away completely. Lopez saw this plainly, and felt, as he had felt in Ashby's case, partly triumphant exultation, partly the bitterest jealousy. But he had a careful guard over every exhibition of his own feelings. And yet, in the midst of his exultation, his jealousy, and his efforts at self-control, he marvelled greatly at the intensity of feeling displayed by this girl, whom he had believed to be so immovable. And for whom?—for an acquaintance of three days' standing.

'Oh, but you see,' said he, 'there is something else to prevent, unfortunately.'

'Something else!' repeated Katie, in a low, trembling voice; 'and *unfortunately*! Did you say *unfortunately*?'

'I said *unfortunately*,' said Lopez. 'You see—I forgot to mention it before, as I did not know that you were acquainted with him—but this Rivers has been arrested as a spy.'

This was, of course, untrue; but Lopez was merely trying an experiment on Katie.

The experiment was fearfully successful.

In an instant all that Lopez had said at their last interview about the fate of spies rushed to her mind. Ashby's fate she had regarded with mild pity, but the fate of Rivers seemed to crush her down into the dust.

She clutched the arm of Lopez convulsively with both her hands ; she raised up her face, white with horror ; she gasped for breath.

'Oh, señor ! oh, señor !' she cried ; ' what is it that you mean ? A spy ! Harry a spy, and arrested ! Oh, you cannot mean it ! Say that you do not mean it ! Oh, say it—say it !'

She could say no more. Her grasp loosened. She fell back, and, burying her face in her hands, burst into a passion of tears. Sobs convulsed that slender frame. Lopez sat with a bitter smile regarding her.

'You seem to value the life of this Rivers,' said he at length, after a long silence.

Katie lifted her face, and regarded him with eyes all red and swollen.

'His life !' she exclaimed, with a shudder—'his life ! Ah, that is it ! And I see in your face that there is—no—hope. Oh, Harry ! oh, Harry, Harry !'

Her voice died away in a low shudder. Lopez himself was moved. He had not been in the least prepared for such an utter breakdown as this. Ah ! now he saw that Katie could love, and how she could love ! At the force of that love all else passed away—pride, shame, hate, all ; everything was forgotten except that name, upon which her voice dwelt with such longing.

'Yes,' he said, 'he is a spy. He is now being tried, or rather, he has been tried—for I may as well tell it—and has been condemned. I need say no more about it ; I have already said enough. You know the fate of a condemned spy. Before another hour all will be over.'

At first Katie seemed about to faint, but the last sentence roused her. She started up, and again seized his arm with her convulsive grasp. With white, tremulous lips, she said, in a low voice which had sunk to a whisper :

'An hour ! an hour ! Did you say—another hour ?'

Lopez bowed his head in silence.

'But *you—you—you*,' said Katie fiercely—'*you* do not believe him guilty ?'

'I have nothing to do with it,' said Lopez coldly.

'Nothing to do ? Are you not commander here ?'

'Yes.'

'Can you do nothing ?' she asked again.

'No. The trial is over. His fate has already been decided ; in another hour all will be over.'

The repetition of these words roused Katie to a fresh outburst of despairing grief.

'Oh !' said she ; 'in so short a time ! so short !'

'It was because he was so near his doom,' continued Lopez, 'that the condemned prisoner requested to see you, and I thought I would

mention it. Had it not been for this request, he would have been shot without your knowing it.'

Katie wrung her hands, in a blind passion of despair.

'Oh!' she burst forth, 'something must be done! He shall not die! He must not! Oh, heavens! how can I live, and think of it? Harry! Harry! was there no one to speak for you? A *spy*! It's false! He was a simple traveller. Oh, Captain Lopez, there must be some way of saving him, or at least of deferring his doom. Can it not be put off—for one day?'

'That would be of no avail,' said Lopez.

'One day!' pleaded Katie, in eager tones.

'It's useless,' said Lopez; 'it's impossible. The sentence of the court cannot be revoked.'

'But time flies! Oh, Captain Lopez, can you not let him go?'

'Oh yes,' said Lopez. 'I can do that, easily enough. I could let him out, so that he could escape.'

At this Katie fell on her knees, and clasped the hands of Lopez.

'Oh, Captain Lopez, I kneel to you! I pray to you! On my knees I pray for his life! Let him fly! Oh, let him fly! Oh, I pray—I pray on my knees!'

Lopez drew a long breath. This scene was terrible to him in many ways; but, above all, it was terrible to see what love was thus lavished on this comparative stranger, when he would risk his life, and had risked his life, for a single smile.

'Think,' said he, 'what it is that you ask. The moment I let him go, that moment I myself am a criminal, I myself am condemned. I must fly—I must become a ruined man! Ruined! Worse; dishonoured, disgraced, in my native land; I who have had high ambitions, and have won no mean distinctions. And yet do you ask this of me?'

Katie bowed her head down; she kissed his hands, and in tremulous tones said:

'Oh, I must—I must! I do!'

Lopez was trembling from head to foot. He himself could now scarcely speak from agitation.

'And may I,' he said, in a low voice—'may I—ask—nothing from you—when I give up—honour, life, hope, all—for your sake?'

There was a suggestiveness in this question which flashed at once in all its fullest meaning into Katie's mind. She dropped his hands; she sank upon the floor; she bowed her head tremblingly and despairingly.

Lopez looked at her with an agitation equal to her own, and a despair only less. She loved another—she could never love him; she loved another—oh, how vehemently, how dearly she loved him! Yet she *must* be his!

'One hour was allowed him,' murmured Lopez—'one hour to prepare. Much of that hour has already passed. Say, will you save his life? and shall I set him free? Say, shall I go to ruin? Say, will you give up as much for me as I am ready to give up for you? Quick—another minute, and it may be too late!'

Katie started up wildly.

'Go! go! she said, in a hot, feverish whisper. 'Haste—fly—save him!'

'You promise?' said Lopez.

'Oh, my God! yes!' cried Katie, and fell senseless to the floor.

'See to your mistress,' said Lopez, in a faltering voice, as he went outside and met the attendant there.

Then Lopez went away, not to free Harry, for he was already free, but to a lonely room, where he flung himself on his face on the stony floor, and lay there long, weeping like a child.

For the agony of this man at winning Katie thus was equal to that of Katie over her act of self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XLVII.

IN WHICH LOPEZ USES HIS ADVANTAGE TO THE UTTERMOST,
AND KATIE SINKS INTO DEEPER DESPAIR.

AND so Lopez had resolved to gratify both his love and his vengeance. He was determined at all hazards to force Katie to be his wife; and at the same time he would be able to take a sweet and most effective revenge on the hated Ashby. As for this new lover, Rivers, who had so unexpectedly started up, the decision was more difficult. He felt no hate toward him, as he did toward Ashby. He had received no insults at his hands. There was in Harry's manner none of that outrageous superciliousness which had made Ashby so detestable. The face of Rivers was of itself one which conciliated all, and his character was visible in his frank, free and easy manners. With such a man it was almost impossible to quarrel; still, the jealousy of Lopez had been roused at the discovery of Katie's love for Rivers, and for this he felt a resentment. He determined, therefore, to include that young man in his plans, and thought that the simplest and most effective mode of dealing with him would be to invite him also to the wedding. Thus both the lovers should see with their own eyes the end of this affair. Ashby should see it, Rivers also should see it. The prospect was a delightful one, and did much toward restoring Lopez to his equanimity.

'Aha!', he said to himself, as he reached this conclusion—'aha, my tender, cooing doves! how will you like that?'

Another thought, which gave him almost equal delight, was that of the revenge which he would be able to take on Russell.

Russell had stirred up his deepest hate. He had insulted him at Madrid, and had put a stop to his attentions to Katie. He had publicly expelled him from the railway carriage. Had he been Katie's father, Lopez would have felt resentful enough, and would have found it hard to forgive ; but as he was merely a guardian, and as Katie had no affection for him, he was under no constraint whatever, and could gratify his revenge without any hindrance. It was to him a most delightful chance which had thrown Russell in his way under such peculiar and ridiculous relations to Rita ; and to take advantage of this was a happy thought, which filled him with such exultation that for a time he almost lost sight of the darker and more disheartening side of this affair.

That darker side was the aversion which Katie had evinced toward himself. She had shown it. It was not merely her love for Rivers ; it was something like repugnance to himself which, had been evident at their first meeting. The juncture which he considered most favourable to his hopes had evidently been most unfavourable. He had hoped to be received as a deliverer ; he had only been viewed as a captor. Her face, her expression, her tears, her agony, were all present evermore to his memory.

He must see her soon. He must press on this marriage at once. Delay would only be worse. His situation here was precarious. If he were to linger too long, the Carlists might rally, and he would be besieged. Before that could happen he must have Katie for his wife, and then retreat as fast as possible. He could not defer the marriage till they reached Vittoria, for then Katie would surely elude him and effect her escape. He concluded that he must be married on the following day at the farthest, and in the morning. To postpone it any longer was not to be thought of.

That evening he visited Katie once more. As he entered and looked at her, he was struck to the heart to see the change that had come over her. She was pale, thin, and haggard. She looked up hastily, with staring eyes. Then she started up and looked, but said nothing. But Lopez reflected that all this was the result of a love for another, and at that thought his pity passed away. He would go on with his work, he thought. He would not be defeated by unreasonable whims and violent yet fitful gusts of passion.

'He is safe !' said Lopez.

Katie clasped her hands. Her voice now returned, and, casting up her eyes, she ejaculated in low tones :

'Oh, thank Heaven !—but where—where—has he gone ?'

Lopez shook his head.

'Not yet,' said he ; 'nor can he go—till your promise is fulfilled.'

Katie shuddered.

'Is there—is there—no other way?' she asked tremulously.

'No,' said Lopez. 'And the promise must be fulfilled soon.'

'Soon!' said Katie, with white lips.

'I will explain,' said Lopez. 'I am in danger here in many ways—enemies all around. The moment that Rivers is released I am a ruined man. I too must fly; but you must accompany me. So the moment that Rivers is free you must be mine. Our marriage must take place at once.'

'At once!' cried Katie, with a look of horror. 'Oh heavens!'

Lopez drew a deep breath. This aversion of Katie toward himself was horrible.

'Or else,' continued Lopez, 'in the event of your refusal——'

'What? what?'

'Rivers is a prisoner yet. He has been reprieved—that is all. The court did not decide.'

'A prisoner—yet!' repeated Katie.

'He cannot go,' said Lopez, 'till we are married.'

'Oh heavens!'

'Till then he is in the greatest possible peril; till then he is only safe by the most violent exercise of arbitrary authority on my part. Some of my followers are intensely excited; all are mutinous; they clamour for his death. They look at me with sinister faces and low muttered execrations. With these fierce, implacable spirits how can he be safe? I am not safe myself. The moment I set him free I dare not remain behind. I cannot go—I will not go—without you. His life depends on you. My men cannot be long restrained. I myself have had to tell them that it is only for twenty-four hours.'

'Oh heavens!' cried Katie, in even deeper anguish.

'Before that time is up he must go—yes, long before—so as to be well on his journey, out of reach of these fierce enemies. I must go soon after he does. I cannot go alone—I cannot give up everything. If I give up ambition for your sake, it is only fair that I should satisfy my love.'

'Love!' cried Katie. 'Oh! Love! How can you talk of love?'

'Love!' said Lopez bitterly. 'No one ever felt it so painfully as I.'

Katie was silent. She turned away, wringing her hands.

'Do you wish his life?'

'His life? Oh heavens! am I not ready to lay down my life for him?'

'Lay down your life!' repeated Lopez. 'That is not wanted. No! You have yet a long life to live in love and happiness.'

'Never!' said Katie vehemently. 'There is no love or happiness in life now for me. I love him—I love him, and him only! Oh, how I love him!'

Lopez gave a sneering laugh.

'Pardon me, you are too facile in your loves, señorita, to talk in that strain. You love so easily that you will probably have many love-affairs in your happy future. You loved Ashby, and in a day or two you declare yourself ready to die for Rivers!'

This was a bitter taunt, but Katie's distress was so deep that she did not feel it.

'Oh, I never knew love before!' said she. 'I thought I loved Mr. Ashby; but I was mistaken—I never loved him. It was nothing—I was inexperienced—I didn't understand—I didn't know. But I know now. Oh, I know all now—all!'

Lopez felt rather pleased at Katie's declaration about Ashby. He did not believe her altogether. He believed that she had loved him, but had forgotten him while flirting with another. If she had forgotten Ashby so readily, she would also forget Rivers with equal readiness, and say quite as boldly that she had never loved Rivers. This passion was a sudden whim—it was no more than a dream; she was hardly in her right mind, she was infatuated. Of course she would get over it. And he determined to use his advantages to the utmost. So he returned to the subject.

'You see,' said he, 'as long as Rivers is here, he is subject to the most deadly peril. He is even now in danger. Do you wish to save him?'

'Oh heavens!' cried Katie. 'I do! I do!'

'Well, then, you must do as I have said.'

Katie moaned.

'Will you?'

'Oh, let me wait! I'll promise anything—everything; but, for Heaven's sake, let me wait—only a little, little time! Oh, señor, on my knees I fall—I pray, as I would pray to Heaven, give me time—time—time! only a little—only a very, very little!'

Katie knelt; she put her palms together; she looked up, as in prayer, to this mighty tyrant who held over her such power. Lopez could not endure this sight: it filled him with tender pity, with grief, with remorse. He began to yield.

Instinctively he bent down and took her in his arms. He was about to grant her everything. He was about to tell her, with tears, that he would grant her years, if she would only promise to *try* to love him. But Katie misunderstood his action. The touch of his arms was enough—it was too much! She tore herself away, and stood shuddering and weeping. Lopez felt that gesture of loathing and aversion cut like a knife to his inmost being. At once all tenderness, all pity, departed. He determined to have no more of this trifling.

'Listen!' said he coldly. 'By saving Rivers I destroy myself. You must be my wife. I must then fly—do you hear?—fly

from Spain, from my country, from all I have loved : I must be an exile. This is all for you. Think of all that I give up for you ! I cannot postpone. If I postpone, my people will kill Rivers and myself too. The life of Rivers depends on you alone.'

Katie said not a word. She was helpless.

'To-morrow, early,' said Lopez, 'you must be mine. Rivers shall be then set free.'

Without waiting for any further words, Lopez bade her adieu, and retired.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HOW LOPEZ GOES TO SEE THE PRIEST ABOUT HIS MARRIAGE.

AFTER leaving Katie, Lopez decided to give notice to the priest about the nature of the ceremony that was to be performed, and also to appoint the time for its performance on the following morning. As he entered the room, Talbot saw in his face the sign of some important purpose. At once she divined it. She had already made up her mind as to what that service would be that Lopez expected of her, and what her own action should be. Brooke also, in spite of his plausible arguments, was afraid that she was only too near the truth, and such terrors gathered around the prospect that he could not think of it. But now all suspense was at an end. The truth was about to be made known, and, whatever it was, they would have to face it.

'Señor,' said Lopez, addressing himself to Brooke, yet courteously including Talbot in his glance, 'I have now come to tell you why I have required thus far the company of your friend the priest, and you may explain to him what I have to say. Is is for a very simple and pleasing ceremony—namely, a marriage.'

'A marriage !' repeated Brooke in a low voice.

That word, sometimes so full of joyous meaning and so surrounded with associations of mirth and festivity, now rang in Brooke's ears with a sound as harsh and terrible as that of a death-knell. It was the word which he dreaded more than all others to hear from the lips of Lopez. His heart sank within him, and he knew not what to think, or where to turn for hope. That Talbot would refuse to perform this ceremony he felt convinced, but what would be the consequences of such a refusal under such circumstances ?

'The priest,' continued Lopez, who had not noticed any difference in Brooke's manner, and was not at all aware of the intense agitation which now pervaded all his frame—'the priest

will be ready to perform the ceremony at an early hour to-morrow morning.'

'To-morrow morning!' repeated Brooke mechanically.

Worse and worse! This man was hurrying matters so that he did not leave any time for thought, much less for action. To-morrow morning, at an early hour! Oh, terrible haste! Oh, fearful flight of time! Was there, then, so short a time until this new ordeal, with its new dangers? Brooke shuddered. A sudden thought now came to him, at which he grasped eagerly. It was utterly useless, and he knew it, but it was all that he had to offer against this man's resolution.

'Can the priest officiate without the government license?'

'Government license!' repeated Lopez. 'Of course. The Church does not ask permission of the State to perform the solemn sacraments. What has the State to do with the acts of a priest of the Church?'

'Oh, I don't know,' said Brooke dejectedly; 'it's different in other countries.'

'Spain,' said Lopez severely—'Spain is a Christian country.'

'True—true; I forgot,' said Brooke.

'In an infidel country,' continued Lopez, 'like England or America, the State regulates marriage, of course; but it is different in Spain—very different.'

Brooke scarcely heard this. He was groping about mentally in search of an idea. Another one came—a hopeless one, like the last—but he caught at it, since there was nothing else to do.

'This priest,' said he, 'is an Englishman.'

'Well,' said Lopez, with a slight expression of surprise.

'I didn't know but that it might make some difference,' said Brooke meekly.

'Difference! How?'

'Not—not knowing your language, you know.'

'My language,' said Lopez; 'what does that matter? He has the language of the Church, and that language every priest uses in the formulas and services of the Church, whether he is a Spaniard, or an Englishman, or an African negro. He celebrates the sacraments in the words laid down by the Church, and the languages of the various nations have nothing to do with these holy rites. I fear, señor, you are raising objections which will seem as strange and unreasonable to your friend, this good priest, as they do to me.'

At this Brooke was struck dumb. He had nothing more to say.

'You will tell your friend,' said Lopez, 'to be ready at an early hour to-morrow morning. I also will do myself the honour, señor, to invite you to give us the pleasure of your company on this occasion.'

Brooke bowed, and murmured something about the conscious-

ness which he had of the honour that Lopez had done him ; and in the midst of these commonplaces Lopez retired.

After his departure Brooke remained silent for a long time. Talbot feared the worst, and as she had divined already the meaning of this visit, she understood perfectly the feelings of Brooke. So she said not a word, but patiently waited until he chose to speak. At length he told her all.

'I thought so,' said Talbot.

'What will you do ?' asked Brooke in a low voice.

'Nothing,' said Talbot simply.

'Nothing ?' repeated Brooke.

'What can I do ?'

'Can you not do what he requests ?' asked Brooke, in a trembling voice.

'What ! and marry them ?'

'Why not ?'

'It is impossible !' said Talbot firmly.

'Oh heavens !' moaned Brooke, in a tone of despair.

'Oh, Brooke, do not talk like that !' said Talbot entreatingly.

'Have I not already said all that can be said ?'

'Well,' said Brooke, 'listen to reason for a moment. Only think what marriage is. It is a union of two loving hearts. In Scotland people marry themselves. Why cannot you do in Spain what you might safely do in Scotland ?'

'Yes,' said Talbot, 'and in Turkey a man may marry a hundred wives. Why may not you do in Spain what you may safely do in Turkey ? Oh, Brooke ! Brooke ! Are you altogether candid now, and true to your better self ? Do not tempt me, Brooke. Do not try to shake me. My mind is clear on this point. I cannot do wrong, not even to please you, Brooke.'

As Talbot said this she looked at Brooke with a glance that penetrated to his soul. Her eyes showed unfathomable tenderness and devotion, yet her face and her voice told of a resolve that was immutable.

Then Brooke tried another tone.

'Confound these Spaniards !' he cried. 'Talbot ! Talbot ! Come, why not marry this couple of cursed fools and have done with it ?'

Of these words Talbot took no notice whatever. She was silent for a time and thoughtful. Then she went on to speak :

'I know. I begin, I think, to understand all about it. The girl he means to marry is this English girl, the daughter of Mrs. Russell. Captain Lopez loved her, as we were told. He has followed her here, and effected her deliverance from her Carlist captors, and now, as a matter of course, she feels grateful to him, and is willing to marry him. But how can I do anything ?

I cannot. It is horrible sacrilege. It is frightful sin. No ; I will tell him the whole truth.'

Brooke looked at her with a face of anguish.

'Oh, Talbot,' said he, 'if you do, what will become of you ?'

'What ?' said Talbot, in a firm voice.

'He will kill you—and worse than that,' said Brooke.

'Why should he kill me ?' said Talbot. 'It will do him no good. What cause will he have to kill me ?'

'I have thought it all over,' said Brooke—'all over a thousand times. I have speculated as to the possible result of a frank disclosure, and I've come to the conclusion that it is better to run every risk in this disguise, and go even to the verge of death, rather than divulge your secret now.'

'Divulge my secret !' said Talbot, in surprise. 'And why not ? What is there to divulge ? I have only to say that I am not a priest—I am an English lady, who have assumed this disguise as a safeguard.'

Brooke sighed.

'It's too late, too late ! Oh, fool that I was—cursed, cursed fool ! But I was afraid to trust those Republicans ; I feared that they might harm you if they knew you to be a woman. It was for your sake that I kept your secret, and now it has turned out to be the very worst thing that I could have done.'

'I deny that it was the worst,' said Talbot calmly. 'Thus far it has protected me most effectively. As for the future, we have yet to choose our plans.'

'Too late !' said Brooke.

'I do not think so,' said Talbot. 'You do not give any reasons. At any rate, I will try—'

'Do not ! do not !' said Brooke earnestly. 'It is too late. I will tell you. You see, this deception has gone on so long, and his trust in you is so profound, that the shock would be more than he could bear. As a priest you have won his confidence, even his reverence. If you now tell him that it was all a cheat, his wrath would burst forth beyond all bounds. He would consider it an outrage on his holiest and most generous feelings. He would believe that you had wantonly trifled with all that is most sacred and most sensitive in the heart. Then there is more than this. For some reason he is bent on marrying this girl. If you refuse now, and tell him the truth, it will only intensify his resentment against you, and turn it into a vengeful fury. There is no pain that he will not inflict. There will be nothing too horrible for his revenge. He will say that you deceived and cheated him unnecessarily and persistently ; that even if there was a necessity for it in the first place, you might at least have confided in him after he had shown himself so merciful to me. He will say that you must have found him out

to be a chivalrous gentleman, in whose protection you would have been safe, and this maintenance of your disguise all this time and up to the last moment was a mockery and a sham. And therefore,' concluded Brooke, 'every other resource ought first to be tried, and this should not be made use of till all others have failed. It will be useless at any time; but if it is made use of at all, it ought to be last of all.'

'Well, I don't know,' said Talbot doubtfully. 'I will do as you say, Brooke; but to go on in this way, and keep up this disguise till the last, seems to me to involve certain destruction. I suppose he cannot be persuaded to postpone the marriage?'

Brooke shook his head despondingly.

'No,' said he, 'that is impossible. There is some strong reason for this haste. He has, perhaps, extorted some promise from the girl. Perhaps she does not love him. Perhaps he is afraid if he gives her time that she will back out of it, and is determined to marry her while he has the chance.'

'If that is the case,' said Talbot, 'it only makes it worse for me. If she does not love him, and all this is as you say, there is another and a stronger reason for my refusal to have anything to do with such sacrilege and sin.'

'Oh, Talbot!' said Brooke. He turned his face toward her. It was a face of agony; there was despair in his look. 'Oh, Talbot! I could bear this trial, any trial for myself; but for you—for you, Talbot,' he continued, in thrilling tones—'for you I cannot bear it. Think! Can you not do something?'

Talbot trembled. Her eyes filled with tears. For a time she stood thus with quivering lips and trembling hands, struggling with her emotion, and without much success. When she was able at last to speak it was in tremulous, broken tones.

'Oh, Brooke!' she said, 'for your sake I would do anything, anything; but I cannot, even for your sake, do wrong to others. For you—if it were myself alone that were concerned—I might be tempted to do an act of sacrilege—or sin. Ask me to suffer for you, Brooke, and I will suffer: oh, how gladly! Yes, Brooke,' she continued, in a voice that sent a thrill through all his being—'yes, Brooke, ask me to die for you, or let the chance arise in which I may die to save you, and I will die. But do not look at me so, Brooke! do not look at me so! Your face is full of despair; your look is the look of one whose heart is breaking; and this, Brooke, this seems worse than death! Be yourself, Brooke! rouse yourself! Cannot you take refuge in some other thoughts? The very worst of your songs might rouse you now. Sing, Brooke—sing anything. Talk nonsense, and save your heart and mine from breaking!'

Brooke turned away, and walked up and down for a few minutes, while he struggled to regain his composure. The

struggle was a severe one, but he succeeded in assuming an outward calm. He at length returned, and, placing himself before Talbot, gave that short laugh of his, and said, with some of his old rattle :

'Well, Talbot lad, you're more than half right. And, as I've always said, there's nothing like a good song—and I've lots of good songs ; but as you suggest a bad song—in fact, the worst of all my songs—why, I dare say it wouldn't be a bad idea to sing it. By-the-bye, Talbot, you ought to learn to sing—at least, to hum tunes. I'll teach you how to whistle, if you like. I wonder if this Spanish cur likes music. I'll sing you a song, if you like, and I'll bet ten cents you never heard it before.'

And Brooke sang, to a most extraordinary tune, these most extraordinary words :

"Oh, a raggedy gang to the piper danced,
Of tatterdemalions all,
Till the corpulent butler drove them off
Beyond the manor wall.
The raggedy piper shook his fist :
"A minstrel's curse on thee,
Thou lubberly, duck-legg'd son of a gun,
For settin' dorgs on we !"

'Brooke,' said Talbot, with her usual calm, sad face, 'I'm glad that you are singing, though your song is certainly slightly vulgar.'

'Oh, I know it,' said Brooke ; 'but then vulgarity is sometimes a very good thing. It don't do for people to be too fastidious. The fact is, this age is over-refined, and I'm bound to reform it, or perish.'

CHAPTER XLIX.

HOW LOPEZ INVITES HARRY TO HIS WEDDING, AND HOW HARRY MAKES A DISTURBANCE.

ON the following day the prisoners were roused at dawn. First of all, Ashby was taken to the room in which the marriage ceremony was to be performed, which was the same room where the Russell party had been confined. Half a dozen soldiers came for him, and went through the solemn mockery of treating him as an invited guest. He had scarcely arrived here when Harry also reached the place. A special invitation from Lopez to be present at a wedding had attracted him, and filled him with wonder and curiosity. His anxiety about Katie, and his longing to see her, were as strong as ever, and the effect of these feelings was manifest in his pale face and agitated manner ; but his desire to please Lopez and retain his good-will had drawn him here to

be a spectator, though his abstracted air showed that his thoughts were elsewhere. Thus, silent and preoccupied, Harry stood apart; and Ashby, mindful of their recent hostile meeting, kept to himself, and made no motion toward holding any communication whatever.

As they stood thus, a third comer appeared upon the scene.

This was Russell. He still wore his woman's dress, having a vague idea that it might prove of service in some new attempt to escape, though quite unable to imagine any way in which such escape could be possible. Harry, attracted by this singular figure, looked at him, and recognised him at once, and the effect upon him was so strong that, in spite of his melancholy, he burst into a roar of laughter.

Russell, at this, threw toward him a piteous look of appeal, and then approached him, in search after sympathy. The two were soon engaged in conversation, while Ashby, whom this ludicrous figure had very forcibly affected, stood aloof, watching him with a smile on his face, which he was unable to repress.

The unhappy Russell, full of horror at the prospect before him, still clung to some vague and undefined hopes that at the very last moment some chance might intervene to prevent the terrible tragedy of a marriage with Rita. The appearance of Harry seemed a good omen. He hailed it as such; and had an angel appeared, the sight could scarcely have afforded more joy to the virtuous Russell than that which he felt at the sight of Harry.

While these two were conversing, Brooke appeared, followed by Talbot. Harry's back was turned to the door, so that he did not see Talbot, and Talbot did not see his face. But even if Harry's face had been full before her, she would not have seen it. With a slow step, a face pale as marble, and eyes fixed on the floor, deep in thoughts which were far, far removed from this room and its surroundings, Talbot entered, following Brooke, who was as blind to the assembled company and as deeply preoccupied as herself. Before each there was a terrible ordeal. As for Talbot, she was to be the central figure, and how could she perform her part? For Talbot it was a simple matter to sum up the whole situation. She could either consent or refuse. But for Brooke there was a harder task. It was for him to try to discover some way of saving a friend, whom to save was an impossibility. And so all that Talbot suffered was likewise suffered by Brooke, who, in addition, had his own peculiar sufferings to bear, while Talbot, in addition to her own sufferings, was afflicted still more by the full knowledge of all that Brooke was undergoing.

While Harry was talking with Russell he threw a casual glance around, and caught the outline of Talbot's figure. He

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Two or three more soldiers now came in, until at length there were about a dozen. All the other soldiers were outside. At any other time this unusual ceremony would have attracted a few idle gazers; but just now all the rest of the men were intent upon the important business of breakfast, which was just being ladled out to each from a huge caldron.

Now Rita entered, and with her came Katie, leaning feebly on her arm.

Lopez followed.

At the sight of these two women Russell and Harry stopped their conversation abruptly. For each one the sight was an overwhelming sensation. To Russell it was as though his last hour had come. Here was his persecutor, his tormentor, who was resolved to marry him whether he would or not. He had confided his griefs to Harry, but had been unable to obtain from him any satisfactory advice. What should he do? He could not say; he could not even think. Could he dare to say 'No,' when Lopez and Rita and the priest and all the soldiers expected 'Yes'? Could he face the awful result of disobedience to Lopez, of defiance to Rita? His whole nature shrank back in terror from the thought, and prompted him, in this dire emergency, of two evils to choose the least.

To Harry, also, the sight of Katie was equally overwhelming. He was struck dumb. He stood rooted to the spot, while wonder, suspicion, and fear all struggled together within him.

What was the meaning of all this? A marriage?—a marriage of this Spanish captain? With whom? Who was the bride? What was Katie doing here? And why was Katie coming here in such a manner, with downcast eyes, death-pale face, and drooping, trembling figure, scarce able to walk, and leaning so heavily upon the arm of this Spanish woman? Such were the questions which Harry, in his bewilderment, asked himself and could not answer. To see Katie thus was like the stroke of a thunder-bolt, and he was dumb with wonder. She came with no word, no smile, no look for him; she came like a helpless victim destined for the sacrifice.

Ashby also saw all of this! He had felt already the extremest bitterness towards Katie, yet the sight of her now was powerful enough to awaken within him the deepest pity. What was the meaning of this? Was Katie the bride? Was she about to marry Lopez? Was this the revenge which Lopez had planned? It was manifestly so; and yet why had Katie consented? He could not understand it. It seemed like a fresh proof of her

frivolity and falsity ; and at such an exhibition he felt bewildered. She had been false to him for the sake of Rivers ; was she also false to Rivers for the sake of Lopez ?

And yet, in spite of such thoughts as these, Ashby was full of pity for her. He could not help it. And justly so ; for hard indeed must that heart have been which could have remained unmoved at such a sight. Never was a bride seen more despairing. There was agony in her face, and in her attitude, and in her gestures. It was not a bride that he saw ; it was a victim. It was an altar of sacrifice upon which Katie was to be offered up—not an altar of love.

And thus Ashby, like Harry, stood overwhelmed at this unexpected sight.

Harry felt an almost irrepressible impulse to spring forward and greet her, but something there was in her look which deterred him. It was her face of despair, her attitude of utter weakness and prostration, her downcast eyes, her averted look. He could not move ; he was petrified. There came over him something like a feeling of horror. He shuddered at the sight. All his thoughts and all his soul were fixed on her, while he kept asking himself, What is this ? What does it mean ? A marriage ? And is this the bride—Katie ?

Meanwhile Lopez had taken up a position at the upper end of the room, and, looking around with a sarcastic smile, he began to make a few remarks :

‘Señors,’ said he, ‘I have done myself the honour of requesting your company on this occasion, so as to have your presence on the happiest moment of my life, on the joyful moment when I am to be united in the holy bonds of matrimony to one whom I have long loved, and whom I have at last won by rescuing her from a fearful peril. I shall expect your warmest congratulations ; but however warm they may be, they cannot be adequate to the occasion that calls them forth.’

At this speech Harry stood transfixed. Then his whole nature and aspect changed instantly and utterly. His face grew death-white, there glowed a burning spot on each cheek, and his eyes, as he stared at Lopez, blazed with the fury of a madman.

‘Señor,’ said he feverishly and in a loud voice, ‘who is the lady ?’

Lopez smiled scornfully, and took Katie’s cold hand in his.

‘This,’ said he, ‘is the lady—my chosen bride.’

Scarcely was the action done, scarcely were the words spoken, when Harry’s hand, quick as lightning, had plunged into his breast pocket and snatched forth a revolver. In an instant it was levelled. Lopez saw the act, and with rapid presence of mind dropped Katie’s hand and flung himself flat on the floor.

At the same instant two shots in immediate succession came

from Harry's revolver. In another instant Lopez was on his feet, and had bounded against his assailant. A fierce struggle followed. Harry hurled Lopez to the floor ; but the soldiers rushed up, and those without, hearing the noise, hurried in. All was the wildest confusion, in the midst of which was Harry struggling like a wild beast with overpowering numbers. He was at length held fast by the fierce soldiers, who wished to kill him on the spot, but were restrained by Lopez.

'Tie his hands behind him,' he cried, in a loud voice, 'and leave him here. Don't hurt him. It's nothing at all. It's all a mistake.'

But amidst the crowd of those who rushed upon Harry, Katie, with a wild scream, had flung herself ; and as they now retreated 't the command of their leader, she caught her prostrate lover in her arms, and fainted. Lopez dragged her away rudely. Harry, with his hands tied behind him, rose up and looked all around in despair.

Amidst that wild uproar, Talbot had been roused from her deep abstraction. She looked up, and as the struggle subsided she saw rising full before her out of the crowd of combatants the face of Harry Rivers. She recognised it, and there came over her heart a cold shudder, followed by a dark despair, in comparison with which her late troubles now seemed trivial.

For this was Harry Rivers, the man for whose sake she had come to Spain !

CHAPTER L.

HOW LOPEZ INVITES THE PRIEST TO MARRY HIM, AND HOW THE PRIEST MAKES A DISTURBANCE.

ALL was wild confusion.

Katie had fainted, and Rita was endeavouring to bring her back to consciousness. Russell stood amazed and bewildered. His chief fear now was one of being implicated in this mad outbreak of Rivers, who had been his companion in the train and in the castle, and might be taken as his confidant.

Talbot stood staring at Harry in wonder and in dark perplexity. Harry, however, saw her not ; but thought only of Katie, whom he had failed to save. Struggles now were useless. He could only fall back on despair.

Brooke noticed a new expression on Talbot's face, and marvelled, but thought it merely arose from natural wonder or natural sympathy with this unhappy man, who by his madness had rushed upon his doom.

Ashby meanwhile stood calm. He saw and understood the act of Harry and Katie. He wondered somewhat to find that their

acquaintance had gone so far. He knew that both had been false to him, but had no idea that either had grown to feel such passionate love for the other. And there came over him a passing feeling of jealous anger, together with a natural indignation at the baseness of these two—the one his love, the other his friend—who had both betrayed him. So he looked with cold complacency upon their woes, and thought that they were both receiving such severe retribution that he had no need for further revenge.

Lopez, having seen that Harry's hands were firmly bound, turned to Katie, who at length came to her senses, and looked all around with a shudder. He was anxious to soothe her, so as to finish the ceremony.

'Be calm,' he said, in a low whisper, 'for *his* sake. He may even yet be saved—I swear it. If you perform your promise, I will forgive him. As you value your life, control yourself. If these men understand how it is, they will kill him on the spot.'

At these words Katie shuddered the more, and with a violent effort attained to something like calmness. She then stood up, more tremulous and weak than ever, and stood thus, leaning upon Rita, without daring to encounter Harry's look.

'The ceremony shall go on,' said Lopez, aloud. 'This fool's-play shall not stop it.'

'Keep calm,' he whispered to Katie; 'his life now depends on you altogether.'

Harry still stood there, with soldiers around him, his hands bound, his face bloodless, but with the eyes of a madman.

'Señor,' said Lopez coolly, 'I had no idea that you were a lunatic. You must submit to temporary restraint.'

Harry made no reply. He looked all around, as though trying to see if there might be any signs of sympathy in the faces of the others, as though seeking in his despair for some faint ray of hope. He saw the cold sneer of Ashby; he saw the fierce frown of Lopez; he saw the trembling figure of Russell; he saw the anxious face of Brooke; and then, last of all, he saw—Talbot!

This was the first time that he had got a sight of her face. In that instant, in spite of her disguise, there came in one flash the recognition of the whole truth. He saw that she had been lost—had been captured—had put on this disguise. At this discovery there followed within him nothing less than a complete paralysis of thought and feeling. In the shock of his sudden amazement he could only ejaculate in half-audible tones the one word—'Sydney!'

Lopez heard this, but did not understand it. He wondered why Harry should exhibit such emotion at the sight of the priest, but hastily concluded that it was some more of his wild and insane excitement over this marriage ceremony.

Brooke heard it, and stared in bewilderment first at one and then at the other.

Talbot stood as before. She moved not, she spoke not : she was stolid and stiff, like a statue of ice ; but there was in her face a new horror—it was the face of one who sees a ghost.

To both of these it was a terrible moment. For Talbot saw Harry, and Harry saw Talbot, and each recognised the other fully, though neither ventured to address the other. This, then, was the meeting of those two who had once loved and exchanged vows ; who had suffered and rejoiced together ; who had parted in sorrow, and looked forward to a reunion with joy ; who but a short time since had desired nothing so much as the sight of each other ; this was their meeting and thus it took place, at the very climax of that new and more passionate love which had been conceived by each for another !

Had Harry only recognised her a few minutes before, the sight would have effectually chilled his hot blood and saved him from his mad assault on Lopez. He was calm enough now, however, and this was quite sufficient for the latter.

‘Señor,’ said he, ‘you deserve to be shot on the spot without mercy, but out of regard for this lady and at her solicitation I spare you. And now, señor priest, let the ceremony begin, for this lady seems feeble.’

Lopez waited, expecting Brooke to translate this to Talbot.

Brooke hesitated.

Lopez, in surprise, repeated his words. ‘Why do you not interpret ?’ he added.

It was the crisis of Talbot’s fate. How could Brooke decide ? Why should he interpret at all ? Should he do this ? No ; better draw upon himself the wrath of Lopez. And yet what could he accomplish by a refusal to interpret ? These other prisoners could act. They understood Spanish as well as English. Such were the questions in Brooke’s mind, and he could not decide.

Suddenly the decision on this matter was taken away altogether, and adopted by Talbot herself. She would not let the vengeful wrath of Lopez fall on Brooke or on any other than herself. She understood his feelings fully, and therefore, to put an end to all suspense, she took the matter in her own hands.

She therefore came close up to Lopez, and fixed her large, dark, solemn eyes sternly yet mournfully upon his. Her face bore witness to a resolution that was immutable. Lopez could read its expression and see all that was in her mind.

She pointed to Katie, then to herself, and then to him. Then looking fixedly at him, she shook her head violently and with emphasis, and then hurled the breviary upon the floor. The act and the expression were more eloquent than words. Lopez understood all perfectly. His eyes flashed with just indignation, and a savage smile came over his face.

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'Oho, señor priest,' said he ; 'so you think that because I have once or twice restrained my anger, that I can be set at defiance with impunity ! I'm tired of being magnanimous ; so let me tell you that however merciful I have been before, I will show none now. You must go on. I will allow of no hesitation. Tell him that,' he added, to Brooke.

'He says,' said Brooke, 'that you must obey.'

Talbot scarcely heard this.

She never moved her eyes from Lopez ; she simply shook her head, with her immutable resolve as visible as ever. Lopez could see that the priest, for some motive or other, was bent on self-sacrifice.

He took out his watch. 'I'll allow five minutes,' said he, 'for decision. If at the end of that time you refuse, I will blow out your brains with my own hand. Tell him that.'

'Señor captain,' said Brooke impetuously, 'let me say one word.'

'Translate for me, I say !'

'One word first.'

'Not one—obey me !' cried Lopez in fury.

'Señor captain,' said Brooke, not heeding him, 'this is a priest. It is a matter of conscience.'

'Silence !' roared Lopez. 'Tell him what I said. His time will soon be up !'

Brooke turned to Talbot.

'He'll only give you five minutes, Talbot,' said he. 'I'll try to dissuade him.'

'No use, Brooke,' said Talbot mournfully. 'I came prepared for this.'

Brooke turned again to Lopez.

'The priest says that his vows forbid him to blaspheme the holy sacrament of marriage in this way. He says he will die rather than risk his soul by an act of sacrilege.'

'A curse on his soul !' cried Lopez. 'What do I care ?'

'Look out for your own soul !' cried Brooke.

'Aha ! are you too a priest ? Beware, sir ! your life is already in peril.'

At this moment Harry cried out in a loud voice :

'Stop, Captain Lopez—stop, for God's sake ! This is a mistake—a terrible mistake.'

Lopez turned round in a fury.

'Gag that devil !' he roared.

In a moment the soldiers had seized Harry and bound a bandage over his mouth, by which they effectually stopped any further remarks.

The last chance yet remained which Brooke might seize for Talbot—it was to divulge her secret and tell about her disguise.

To divulge it to this enraged and furious chieftain might now only render him ten times more furious and vengeful ; it might only aggravate the doom of the prisoner ; but the risk must be run.

'Stop!' cried Brooke. 'Señor captain, listen. It's a mistake—— She is——'

'Silence,' roared Lopez, 'or I'll blow your brains out !'

'Señor, this priest is not——'

'Seize this fellow!' yelled Lopez. 'Bind him ! Gag him !'

Several of the men sprang toward Brooke, who struggled madly, shouting at the same time words which soon were drowned in the uproar that followed.

Lopez now snatched a rifle from one of his men. Katie gave a loud scream ; Russell fell on his knees ; Ashby shuddered.

Lopez took deadly aim at Talbot.

'Your time is up!' he said coolly.

Talbot stood motionless, with a face of marble and an attitude perfectly rigid ; not a nerve quivered as she looked into the muzzle of the rifle, but her lips moved as if she were murmuring a prayer.

CHAPTER LI.

IN WHICH AN INTERRUPTION OCCURS IN A MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

TALBOT stood ; the rifle was levelled at her ; Lopez had taken deadly aim ; his finger was on the trigger ; she felt that her last hour had come, and that naught could avail her now but prayer.

Brooke was struggling like a madman. Two of the soldiers had been hurled to the floor ; another was clinging to his neck ; a fourth was savagely trying to gouge out his eyes.

Lopez pulled the trigger. The report rang through the hall.

At that very instant, as the fire and smoke went flashing and blazing at Talbot—or rather, the very instant before—a figure dashed toward her. It was Brooke. By one supreme and convulsive effort he had torn himself away from his assailants, and with one great bound had flung himself at Talbot. At the rush which he made she fell backward, and the next instant Brooke fell upon her. Talbot then struggled up to her feet, and through the dense clouds of smoke reached down to raise up Brooke. He was senseless.

With a low moan like the cry of a suffering animal, Talbot threw herself upon the senseless form. From his forehead there

trickled several streams of blood which fell to the floor in a pool. She pressed her lips again and again to the wound, and then through the dense smoke she rose and looked around, confronting Lopez with the blood of Brooke's wounds staining all her face. It was a face beautiful in its marble whiteness as the face of a statue of Athena; yet terrible in the fixed and stony horror of its eyes, and in the blood-streaks that covered it, and in the incarnate hate of its expression—terrible in all this as the Gorgon face of Medusa.

Lopez shrank back; his vengeance was satisfied, his fury had all subsided, and there flashed through every nerve a thrill of horror. It was then to him as though the dead—the priest whom he had just slain—had sprung up by an immediate resurrection from death to punish him for such atrocious sacrilege. All the superstition of his Spanish nature now rolled in one wave over his soul, overwhelming it with panic fear. The dead! the dead! he thought—the priest with the angel face—murdered because he would not sin—it was he! But the angel face was now the awful head of a haunting and avenging demon.

And now at this very instant, while the smoke was still hanging in dense folds half-way between floor and ceiling; while Brooke still lay in his blood; while Talbot still glared in fury upon Lopez; at this very moment there arose a wild cry—sudden, menacing, irresistible—by which the whole face of the scene was changed.

‘Viva el Rey!’

Such was the cry that now sounded out in the midst of the amazed Republicans. There was a rush and a trample. Then followed the thunder of rifles, and through the smoke dusky figures were visible, rushing to and fro.

Once again, once more, and again, and yet again, report after report rang out. All the room was dense with smoke, and in that thick darkness nothing was visible; but voices yelled in fear, and other voices shouted in triumph; while far above all sounded the war-cry, ‘Viva el Rey!’ ‘Down with the rebels!’ ‘No quarter!’

Shrieks arose in the hall without. Then cries followed—‘Treason! treason! We are betrayed! Fly! fly!’ These words were screamed in the shrill tones of a woman. The terror of that cry communicated itself to all. A universal trample and a rush succeeded, and the whole band of Republicans, in mad panic, fled away.

Out they went, that panic-stricken band, into the courtyard, and out through the gates, and afar away through the open country, each one seeking his own safety, and hearing in his disordered fancy the sound behind him of hot pursuit. There

was no pursuit—no enemy followed close behind ; but in that crowd of panic-stricken fugitives each heard the swift rush and the quick trampling footfalls of all the rest ; and as none dared to look back, so all continued to run ; and so they ran, and ran, and ran, and they have probably been keeping it up ever since, unless, indeed, they thought better of it, and concluded to stop and rest.

The reason why there was no pursuit is a very simple one. The fact is, the attacking force amounted to no more than six, these six being no others than our friends the imprisoned Carlists, headed by the intrepid, the ardent, the devoted, the plucky little Spanish maid Dolores. She had contrived to pick up some stray arms and ammunition with which she had supplied her Carlist friends, and, waiting for some opportune moment, had made a sudden rush, like Gideon upon the Midianites, with the startling results above described.

But let us on with our story.

The smoke rolled away, and there was disclosed a new scene.

Two or three wounded Republicans lay writhing on the floor. Lopez lay near, bound tight, and surrounded by the six Carlists, who, I am sorry to say, insulted their captive by fierce threats and unnecessary taunts. At all this Lopez seemed unmoved, though the expression of his face was by no means a happy one.

It is a very annoying thing, my reader, when you are bringing in your long suit, and the game appears to be all your own, to have it all changed by the interposition of a miserable trump, on the existence of which you had not reckoned ; and then to leave the rôle of Conquering Hero, and change the part of victor for that of vanquished, requires so many high moral qualities that few can be reasonably expected to exhibit them in such a wicked world as this.

And here there is an excellent opportunity to pause and moralize ; but, on the whole, perhaps it is better to proceed.

Very well, then.

There was Dolores, and she was clinging to Ashby in a perfect abandon of joy. She had found him ! that was bliss indeed. She had saved him ! that was joy almost too great for endurance. The impetuous and ardent nature of Dolores, which made her so brave, made her also the slave of her changing moods ; and so it was that the heroine who had but lately led that wild charge on to victory now sobbed and wept convulsively in Ashby's arms. As for Ashby, he no longer seemed made of stone. He forgot all else except the one fact that Dolores had come back to him. Lopez might have perceived, if he had leisure for such observations, that Ashby's English phlegm formed but a part of his character ; and the sight of

that young man's rapture over Dolores might have made him think the English a fickle and volatile race.

The scene disclosed Harry and Katie also in an equally tender situation; for Harry's bonds had been cut, and he had flown at once to Katie's side. But the prostration consequent upon all this excitement was so great that he found it necessary to carry her to the open air.

Dolores now roused herself.

'Come,' said she, 'let us close the gates before they rally.'

With these words she hurried out, followed by Ashby. Then the Carlists followed.

Russell still remained. As yet he could scarcely believe in his good fortune. Over and over again had he felt himself carefully all over to assure himself that no bullet had penetrated any part of his precious skin, and gradually the sweet conviction of his soundness pervaded his inner man. Then there was another joyful discovery, which was that Rita had disappeared. In the wild tumult and dense smoke he had lost sight of her. What had become of her he could not imagine. Whether she had fled in the wild panic, or had remained and concealed herself, he could not say. His knowledge of her character made him dread the worst, and he felt sure she was not very far away. So he thought that the safest place for himself would be as near as possible to those Carlists whom Rita had betrayed, and whom she now justly dreaded more than anything else. So he hurried out after the noble six.

On the floor Brooke lay, and there Talbot was seated, holding his head on her lap. He was senseless, yet she could feel that his heart was beating, and in that pulsation she found her hope. His wounds did not seem deep, for she had felt with tender fingers along the place where the blood was flowing without detecting anything that seemed formidable. Still, the sight of his prostrate and bleeding form, as he lay senseless in her arms, after he had flung his life away for her sake, was one that moved her so profoundly that all the world for her was now at that moment centred in that prostrate figure with the poor, piteous bleeding head. With tender hands she wiped away the blood that still oozed from the wound and trickled down his face; more tenderly still she bowed down low over that unconscious head and kissed the dear wounds that had been received for her, and thus hung over him in a rapture of love and an agony of despair.

Lopez saw this and wondered, and looked on in still increasing wonder, till this was all that he saw, and all else was forgotten in a sudden great light that flashed into his mind.

He saw it all. 'So this,' he thought, 'was the reason why these two held such self-sacrificing affection; this was the reason

why one would persist in risking everything for the other. The priest would not leave the spy when freedom was offered; the priest had stood before the spy, interposing between him and the bullets; the spy had flung himself into the jaws of death to save the priest. Priest! Ah, thou of the angel face! thou, so calm in the presence of death for thy beloved! thou! no angel, no demon, but a woman, with a woman's heart of hearts, daring all things for thy love!

A mighty revolution took place in the breast of Lopez. Bound as he was, he struggled to his feet, and then dropped on his knees before Talbot. He then bent down and examined Brooke very carefully. Then he looked up, nodded, and smiled. Then he kissed Talbot's hand. Then he again smiled, as if to encourage her.

Talbot caught at the hint and the hope that was thus held out. Lopez was offering his assistance. She accepted it. She determined to loose his bonds. True, he might fly on the instant, and bring back all his men; but the preservation of Brooke was too important a thing to admit of a moment's hesitation. Besides, had she not already discovered that this Spaniard had a heart full of noble and tender emotions? that he was at once heroic and compassionate, and one on whose honour she might rely to the uttermost?

With a small penknife she quickly cut his bonds.

Lopez was free.

But Lopez remained. He bent over Brooke. He raised him up to a more comfortable position, and examined him in a way which showed both skill and experience.

Then he suddenly rose and left the room. Talbot heard his footsteps outside. Was he escaping? she asked herself, and her answer was, No.

She was right. In a few moments Lopez came back with some cold water. He bathed Brooke's head, loosened his neck-cloth, and rubbed his hands as skilfully as a doctor and as tenderly as a nurse.

At length Brooke drew a long breath, then opened his eyes, and looked around with a bewildered air. Then he sat up and stared. He saw Lopez, no longer stern and hostile, but surveying him with kindly anxiety. He saw Talbot, her face all stained with blood, but her eyes fixed on him, glowing with love unutterable and radiant with joy.

'Oh, Brooke,' said she, 'tell him to fly! He is free—tell him.'

Not understanding any of the circumstances around him, Brooke obeyed Talbot mechanically, and translated her words simply as she had spoken them.

'Fly!' said he; 'you are free!'

A flush of joy passed over the face of Lopez.
 'Noblest of ladies !' said he, looking reverentially at Talbot,
 'I take my life from you, and will never forget you till my
 dying day. Farewell ! farewell !'
 And with these words he was gone.

CHAPTER LII.

IN WHICH TALBOT TAKES OFF HER DISGUISE.

BROOKE and Talbot were now alone ; for, though there were one or two wounded in the room, yet these were too much taken up with their own pains to think of anything else.

Brooke's wound, after all, turned out to be but slight. The bullet had grazed his skull, making a furrow through the scalp of no greater depth than the skin, and carrying away a pathway of hair. The sudden and sharp force of such a blow had been sufficient to fell him to the floor and leave him senseless ; but, upon reviving, it did not take a very long time for him to regain his strength and the full use of his faculties. The traces of the blow were soon effaced, and Brooke at last showed himself to be very little the worse for his adventure. His face was marked here and there by spots from the powder ; but the blood-stains were quickly washed away, and his head was bound up in a narrow bandage made of Talbot's handkerchief. His hat, which had fallen off during his struggles with the soldiers, was now recovered, and, as it was of soft stuff, he was able to wear it.

'With this,' said he, 'Brooke is himself again.'

Talbot now proceeded to wash the blood-stains from her own face.

'That looks better,' said Brooke. 'Streaks of blood did not improve your personal appearance.'

He tried to speak in his usual careless tone, but his voice was tremulous and agitated.

'Your blood, Brooke,' said Talbot, in a faltering voice—'your blood—poured out—for me !'

There was a solemn silence after this. Then Brooke leaned back and gave a heavy sigh.

'I feel a little shaky still,' said he.

'Let me support you,' said Talbot, with feverish eagerness. 'You must be weak still—very weak. You must not exert yourself too much.'

She held out her arms as though to raise him up ; but Brooke drew back.

'No, no,' he murmured, in a faint voice ; 'it's no matter—no matter at all.'

Talbot looked down and said nothing.

'I don't know what happened,' said Brooke. 'Where is everybody? And Lopez—why did you tell him he was free? Was he a prisoner? And how? Tell me all about it.'

Upon this Talbot narrated as briefly as possible the circumstances of the recent struggle.

'Where is everybody now?' asked Brooke.

'I don't know. It is enough for me that you are here, and alive and safe.'

'And so you let Lopez go, after all?' asked Brooke, after another pause.

'Yes,' said Talbot; 'he did what I was praying for—he brought you back to life. Was I wrong?'

'Wrong or right,' said Brooke, 'I approve of it. Everything that you do is right in my eyes.'

Talbot now began to take off the priest's dress.

'What are you doing?' asked Brooke hastily, starting up to his feet with a quickness which showed that, as he had said, he was quite himself again.

'I have no further use for this dress now,' said she. 'I will take it off.'

'Don't,' said Brooke imploringly. 'Wear it still—at least as long as you are with me; for I shall think of you, Talbot, in that dress always, until my dying day—you in that dress—in that priest's dress, with the face of an angel of heaven. It was thus that you looked as you came between me and the levelled guns of the soldiers at the old mill. Talbot, I should now be a dead man, but for you.'

Talbot looked at him earnestly, and a sad smile stole over her face.

'Brooke,' said she, 'I should now be a dead girl, but for you.'

They both stood face to face. Brooke's memory was now fully restored, and in his mind there was the clear and unclouded recollection of that scene which had called forth his act of self-surrender. As he looked at Talbot, he saw her eyes fastened on his with an expression such as he had seen there before more than once—a look which told him of all that was in her heart. He held out his hands. She held out hers to meet them, and he seized them in a convulsive grasp. Thus they stood, holding one another's hands, and looking into one another's eyes and hearts.

Talbot's eyes were moist with tears that trembled in them, and her lips quivered as though she was about to speak. But Brooke said not one word.

At last Talbot burst forth.

'Brooke,' said she impetuously, 'you may keep silent, if you choose; but I will not, for I cannot. I will speak, Brooke. My

life is yours, for you have saved it, and henceforth all old ties belonging to my old life are broken. From this time I fling all the past away for ever, and begin life anew.'

Brooke looked at her with unutterable agitation.

'Oh, Talbot, Talbot, what do you mean?'

Talbot drew nearer and spoke further. Her eyes were fixed on his with a deeper and more earnest gaze; her voice was low, and slow, and tremulous; and at every word there went a thrill through all the being of the man to whom she spoke. And this man to whom she spoke was one whose idol she had already grown to be; whose heart her presence filled with silent delight; through whom her glance flashed with the force of lightning; through whose frame her lightest touch could send a tremor of ecstasy. This man she now held, her hands clasped in his, her eyes fixed on his, and her lips uttering words such as he had never heard before.

'Oh, Brooke,' said Talbot, 'I will speak! Brooke—noble, tender heart!—you love me, and with all the strength of your soul. Honour forbids you to say this in words, but you say it in every look, and it is spoken in every tone of your voice, and I feel it in every touch of your hands. Can I not read it in your eyes, Brooke, every time that you look at me? Most of all, can I not see how you love me when you fling your life away for me? But what is that last act of yours? It is nothing more than the sequel of long acts of self-sacrifice for me! Brooke, I know that you love me, and that you love me better than all the world, and better than life itself. Keep your words to yourself, if you choose. Lock your lips tight. Save your plighted word, if you can; but, after all, your heart is mine. I know that you love me, and me only, and, Brooke—oh, Brooke! you know—well—well you know how dearly I—love—you!'

It was his Talbot who said this, and she said it to him, and she said it at the very time when he was all quivering under the influence of his own mighty love, and the magnetism of her look and of her touch. His head fell bowed down nearer to her as she spoke; he trembled from head to foot. He tore away his hands from her grasp, flung his arms around her, and strained her again and again to his breast in a convulsive energy of passion. His voice was all broken, and was scarce audible as, in agitated tones, he murmured in her ear:

'Talbot! Talbot, darling! I love you—I adore you! I never knew what love was, till I met you!'

* * * * *

These asterisks are intended to represent a long silence which succeeded the remarks above reported. The policy of silence was for them quite the most sensible under the circumstances. Until this moment they had both clung to those engagements to others

which neither had forgotten, and which they had confided to each other. Each knew the other's secret. But now they both flung up those engagements and confessed their love to one another. And how such high-toned people could justify such conduct to their consciences is a problem that I, for my part, don't pretend to be able to solve.

At length they began to be aware of the existence of the outside world.

'These poor wounded,' said Talbot, 'require some attention. Let us go out. Let us get some water and try to make it easier for them.'

Talbot now proceeded to take off the priest's dress, in which task she had been interrupted by Brooke. He again tried to dissuade her, but in vain.

'No,' said she; 'it only gets me into trouble. If I am to be taken prisoner again, it shall be in my true character. This disguise may be useful to you.'

And with these words Talbot removed the dress, and stood forth in her own proper costume—that of an English lady, as she was when Brooke first met her.

And now the two went out to procure water for the wounded prisoners.

CHAPTER LIII.

WHICH TELLS OF A REUNION OF VERY DEAR OLD FRIENDS.

WHILE Brooke and Talbot were thus conversing, others were indulging in the same pursuit, and none to better purpose than Harry and Katie.

No one can say that Katie had not been very severely tried, and had not passed through a most distressing ordeal. Apart from the long trial of mind which had preceded that eventful morning, the circumstances of the final scene were enough to shake up stronger nerves than those of Katie. So completely was she prostrated, that under any other circumstances nothing could have saved her from a fit of sickness, which might possibly have resulted in brain-fever and terminated fatally, for all I know; but fortunately, under these actually existing circumstances, she was spared all this. The presence of Harry made all the difference in the world.

After retiring from the scene of conflict, they ascended into that upper chamber in which Katie had last been imprisoned, and here they seated themselves so that Katie might rest, supported by Harry's encircling arms, and at the same time be refreshed by

the fresh air. Katie now began to rally with the rapidity which is characteristic of buoyant natures, and soon began to show something of her usual lightness of heart. Harry, however, though most tender and affectionate, seemed changed, and the change was soon detected by Katie's quick perception.

'What is the matter with you?' she asked. 'You don't seem glad at all.'

'Oh yes,' said Harry, 'I'm very glad indeed.'

He spoke in a doleful tone of voice, which was by no means in accord with his words.

'Your voice don't sound very glad,' said Katie reproachfully; 'and you look troubled. You are so preoccupied that you can't say anything. But I suppose you feel the effects of that awful scene—and oh, how awful it was!'

Katie relapsed into silence, and Harry felt somewhat relieved; for in truth he was preoccupied, and had much on his mind.

It was the thought of Talbot that filled his mind. It was she whom he had seen in that priest's disguise. It was his affianced bride whom he had lost, and now at last found! Found! Great Heaven! and here! and thus! Here—when he was here ready to die for Katie; when he was now with Katie, who had turned to him from all the world!

Was he a man of honour? Honour! The name now seemed a mockery. Which way would honour impel him? To give up Katie? What! when she had given up all for him? What! when he had fought a mortal quarrel with Ashby for her? Honour? Was not honour due to Ashby? and had he not been a traitor to his friend?

There was this fight yet before him, and it would be soon; for Ashby was free. A fight for Katie! And Talbot was here! She would know all. And she—she who had come all the way from England, who had found him not, who had imagined herself deserted—she would learn of his perfidy. The thought was horrible. Upon such agonizing thoughts as these came Katie's question:

'Why are you so sad?'

Harry sighed.

'I'm thinking of Ashby,' said he. 'He's free now. He'll soon be seeking you.'

At this Katie tapped her foot nervously.

'Well,' said she, 'if you are thinking of him it's very bad taste to say so. I wasn't thinking of him at all.'

But this remark seemed to set Katie off thinking about Ashby, for she too seemed preoccupied.

'I think it's a great shame,' said she.

'What?'

'Why, for Mr. Ashby to come bothering me just now.'

Harry said nothing, and they both relapsed once more into silence.

The harder task was before Harry. There were two for him to face. One, the friend to whom he had been a traitor; the other, his betrothed, to whom he had been false. Of these two the latter was by far the worse. He had faced Ashby already, and could face him again, as a mortal enemy, to fight a mortal battle; but Talbot! Ah! with what eyes could he look upon that pure and noble face? With what words could he address her?

Katie's thoughts seemed to be running in that channel which Harry was using for his own; for she suddenly looked at him with earnest scrutiny, and said abruptly:

'But you are as bad.'

'As bad?'

'As bad as me.'

Harry sighed.

'Mr. Ashby,' said Katie innocently, 'will want to see you too, you know.'

'Of course,' said Harry.

'Oh well, then,' said Katie, 'I needn't see him at all. You can explain it all; for really I hardly know what I can possibly find to say to him.'

'I'm afraid,' said Harry, 'that he will insist on seeing you, and on learning his fate from your own lips.'

'His fate!' said Katie—'oh dear!'

'I would take all the difficulty from you if I could,' said Harry, 'but I don't see how I can.'

'Oh well,' said Katie cheerfully. 'Perhaps he will not be in any very great hurry to see me, after all. He did not seem very anxious about me in the room below. *He* did not look like a maniac. *He* did not remonstrate with Lopez. *He* did not draw his pistol and attack the captain in the midst of his men. *He* did not fight for me, and risk his life. No; *he* thought too much of his own dear self, and left all the fighting and all the risk to one who is worth far more than ten thousand Ashbys! And that's what I'll tell him!' said Katie. 'Let me see him now, while all this is fresh in my memory. Come, Harry, let us wait no longer, but if this meeting has to be, let it be now.'

Katie poured forth these words in an impetuous torrent, and, starting up, led the way out. Harry followed, and thus they descended the stairway to the lower hall.

Ashby had gone out shortly after Harry and Katie, following Dolores, who was anxious to see about the gates. The six Carlists followed. The gates were wide open, and far away a few of the fugitives could still be seen flying as fast as their feet could carry them. The six Carlists soon had the gates firmly closed and barred, and mounted guard here, deeming this to be the weak

point of the castle ; and thinking, too, that if an enemy appeared, he would consider six men at the gate a sign that six hundred were in the garrison.

Russell had followed the six Carlists, thinking that with them he would be safer than anywhere else. Rita had now a horror of those Carlists whom she had betrayed, and, as he thought, would venture anywhere rather than into their presence.

And now the good man felt quite martial. This new change in his situation, and the inspiring presence of his military friends, made him determine to get rid of that odious disguise which Rita had furnished him. He proceeded, therefore, to divest himself of it.

The Carlists had not noticed him thus far, and had not at all recognised him. Great was their surprise when they saw this 'woman' tearing off her outer robe ; but far greater was it when they saw the marvellous transformation of a commonplace woman into a resplendent general-officer all in blue and gold.

A murmur ran through them, partly of amusement, partly of approval. One of them addressed him. Russell shook his head. 'He is a French general,' said one ; 'he doesn't understand us. Can't some one speak French ?'

No one could. One of them then ran inside and brought out a sword, with belt, etc., which he handed to the 'French general.' Russell took it, and after some trouble succeeded in buckling the martial gear around him. Then, by way of an additional safeguard against his enemy, he drew his sword, and taking his seat on a stone near the gate, glared watchfully around.

Dolores and Ashby had much to talk of, but Dolores was too prudent to waste time on mere explanations. There was yet very much to be done. Above all, they must now consider how they were to get out of the castle. After all, as far as she could see, their position had changed little, if at all, for the better. The enemy would rally. They would be attacked. No defence was possible. They would soon be prisoners or fugitives. And if they were to fly, how could they hope to escape in a country swarming with roving bands of marauders belonging to both parties ? The problem was a difficult one, and one which was not to be solved very readily.

At length Dolores thought of the wounded men, and as she had a very tender heart, she proposed to go and help them. The two then returned and entered the castle. They reached the hall at the very time when the other parties were coming into it—namely, Brooke and Talbot from the room, and Harry and Katie from the upper regions. Such coincidences are frequent in real life, and still more frequent in our 'Castles in Spain.'

As Brooke and Talbot came out, Ashby and Dolores, advancing toward the room, met them face to face. Brooke and Dolores

looked upon one another. There was the flash of mutual recognition in the faces of both. Brooke seemed struck dumb. Dolores was the first to speak.

'Raleigh!' she said, in tones of amazement and consternation.

'Dolores!' said Brooke, in a deep, hollow voice.

Brooke was ghastly; but this may have been the effect of the recent shock. As for Dolores, every trace of colour fled from her face, and she was as white as marble.

Talbot heard this, and saw it. These words, these familiar names, smote her to the heart. She recollected the story which Brooke had told her. She remembered the name of that Cuban maid. It was this—it was 'Dolores!' Was this she?

She looked around in despair.

At that moment, as her despairing eyes wandered around, they fell full upon the face of Harry; for Harry and Katie on descending the stairs had, on this instant, reached the spot.

Harry saw her again.

The priest's dress was removed. She stood in her own garb—her very self—Talbot! with all her noble face revealed, and all her exquisite grace of feature and of form.

'Sydney!' said he.

'Harry!' said Talbot.

Katie heard this. She turned pale. All her thoughts fled from her; she shrank back, and stood staring. But one thought now remained—the thought suggested by that name, Sydney. Well she remembered that name, and all the incidents of that story which Harry had told her when they were first acquainted—the wreck of the ship—the maiden deserted and despairing—her rescue by Harry—their escape in the boat—their love—their plighted faith—the appointed marriage—the lost bride.

Sydney! It was she herself—the promised bride of Harry, whom he would, no doubt, be required to wed at once.

Now she understood why Harry had been so preoccupied.

CHAPTER LIV.

IN WHICH A NUMBER OF PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES IN A VERY EMBARRASSING SITUATION.

BROOKE and Dolores stood facing one another in silence. The embarrassment was most painful. Each felt it too much to be able to notice it in the other, and each instinctively avoided the glance of the other's eyes, casting only looks of a furtive kind at the other's face, and then hastily looking elsewhere. In fact, the situation was truly horrible.

But Brooke felt it incumbent on him to say something; he also felt anxious to vindicate his honour—if such a thing were,

indeed, in any way possible. But ardent words, excited, eager welcomes, and all those other circumstances that usually attend upon the meeting of long-divided lovers were, in this case, clearly impossible. Brooke felt Talbot's presence—Talbot, who was worth to him ten thousand like Dolores; so he could only take refuge in the most commonplace conventionalities. It is true, Talbot could not understand Spanish; but Talbot could understand those tones of voice which form the universal and natural language of man; and if Brooke had felt ever so full of eager delight, he would have hesitated to manifest it under such very delicate circumstances.

At length Brooke cleared his throat.

'This,' said he, in a solemn tone—'this is indeed an unexpected pleasure.'

Dolores sighed.

'It is indeed, señor,' she replied, 'an unexpected, a most unexpected one.'

'It is indeed,' said Brooke, in quite a helpless way.

Saying this, he held out his hand. Dolores held out hers. They shook hands. Then they cast hasty looks at one another.

'I hope you have been quite well,' said Brooke.

'Oh, quite,' said Dolores; 'and you, señor?'

'Oh, very well,' said Brooke; 'very well indeed.'

And now another pause succeeded. Both of them were horribly embarrassed. Each had the same feeling, but neither one knew the feeling of the other. Each knew that a change had occurred, but neither knew that the same change had been experienced by the other. Brooke knew himself false, but thought Dolores true; while Dolores had a similar feeling. Besides, this new love which each had conceived and cherished made the old one seem a mistake—made them regard each other with aversion, and this meeting as a calamity; yet each felt bound to conceal these feelings, and exhibit toward the other an impossible cordiality. All this caused a wretched embarrassment and restraint, which each felt, and for which each took the blame, thinking the other altogether true and innocent.

The deep feelings of the past were yet strong in their hearts—the immediate past—and with these their hearts were full. Yet these had to be concealed. Each felt bound to the other by a solemn vow, and by every principle of duty and honour. They had exchanged vows of love and eternal fidelity. From such vows who could release them? Yet the vows were already broken by each, and of this each was conscious. Had Brooke met Dolores before this last scene with Talbot, he might have felt self-reproach, but he could not have felt such a sense of unworthiness. For before that he had, at least, kept a watch upon his tongue, and in words, at least, he had not told his love

for another. But now his word had gone forth, and he had pledged himself to another, when there was a previous pledge to Dolores.

But he had to say something. Dolores was silent. He thought she was waiting for him to explain.

'I—I—' he stammered—'I have hunted—hunted you—all through Spain.'

This was the truth, for Brooke had been faithful to Dolores until he had met with Talbot.

Dolores was conscience-smitten by this proof of her former lover's fidelity. She hastened to excuse herself somehow.

'I—I—' she said, with an embarrassment equal to that of Brooke—'I thought you were in America.'

'No; I was in Cuba.'

'I thought I had lost you,' said Dolores: 'you ceased to write.'

This sounded like the reproach of a faithful lover. Brooke felt hurt.

'Oh no,' said he; 'I wrote, but you ceased to answer.'

'I thought something had happened,' said Dolores.

'I thought so too,' said Brooke. 'I never got your letters. Where did you go?'

Dolores jumped at this question as giving a chance of relief. So she began to give a long account of her life in Spain, detailing minute incidents, and growing gradually calmer, more self-possessed, and more observant of Brooke. She saw with satisfaction that Brooke made no demonstrations; yet her satisfaction was checked by the thought that perhaps he was deterred from exhibiting the raptures of a lover by the presence of others—by the fear that he had been only too true, and that those raptures would yet be exhibited. She resolved that he should not have an opportunity. Yet how could she avoid him? And thus she thought, and still she went on talking.

The effect of her story was a crushing one. She made no mention of Ashby; and Brooke concluded that she had been true, while he had been false. And now what was he? Clearly false. Could he come back to Dolores? Could he be what he had been? Could he give up Talbot? The thought was intolerable. Never had any one been to him so dear as Talbot. Never had Talbot been to him so dear as now. And yet was he not in honour bound to Dolores? Honour! and did not honour bind him to Talbot?

Such was the struggle within this unhappy man.

Almost at the same time Harry and Talbot had recognised each other.

Talbot, who had stood unmoved at the presence of death, now felt herself quail and grow all unnerved at the presence of Harry.

But then she had been strengthened by her new love for Brooke ; now she was weakened by the remembrance of her lost love for Harry. This was an ordeal for which there was no outside inspiration. The remembrance of her passionate words to Brooke, so lately uttered, so ardently answered, was strong within her. And yet here was one who held her promise, who could claim her as his own, who could take her away from Brooke ; and what could she do ?

Harry, on the other hand, had dared death for Katie ; for her he had tried to fling away his life. This had been done in the presence of his Sydney. Had she understood that ? She could not have understood it. Could he explain ? Impossible ! Could he tell the story of his falsity to this noble lady, whom he had known only to love, whom he had known also to revere ? And this proud, this delicately nurtured girl had come from her home for his sake, to suffer, to risk her life, to become a miserable captive ! Was there not in this a stronger reason than ever why he should be true to her ? And yet, if he loved another better, would it not be wrong to marry Sydney ?

All the tenderness of his heart rose up within him in one strong, yearning thought of—Oh, Katie ! But all his honour, his pride, his manliness—all his pity, too, and his sympathy—made itself felt in a deep undertone of feeling—Oh, Sydney ! true and faithful !

At last he was able to speak.

‘Oh, Sydney,’ said he, ‘what bitter, bitter fortune has brought you here to this horrible place—to so much misery ?’

Talbot looked down. She could not look in his face. She felt unworthy of him. He seemed faithful still. She had seen the act of his attacking Lopez, but had not understood it. She thought him faithful, in spite of all.

‘Bitter !’ said she slowly. ‘Bitter ! yes, bitter indeed—bitter was the fortune that brought me here !’

She could say no more. She was thinking only of that bitter fortune which had brought her to a place where she might be forever torn from Brooke ; where Brooke, too, had found one who might tear him from her.

But Harry understood this differently. He detected in those words a reflection upon himself. He thought she alluded to her long journey to him—when she had come so far, and had reached her destination only to find him absent ; when she had waited for days without finding any trace of him or hearing any word from him, and at last had turned about on her lonely homeward road. And yet he was blameless then. As far as that was concerned, he could excuse himself ; he could explain all. He felt so guilty in some things, that he was anxious to show his innocence in other things where he had not been to blame ; and so he

hastened most eagerly to give a long and an eloquent vindication of himself, by explaining all about his journey to England, and his return to Barcelona, and his search after her which had led him to this.

And in all this Talbot found only proofs of Harry's unalterable fidelity. He had been true! She had been false! What now was there for her to do? To sacrifice this man? What! after such love and loyalty? Or, on the other hand, to give up Brooke? Brooke!—give up Brooke! Oh heavens! How was that possible? Would she not rather die than give up Brooke! When her own words to him were fresh in her memory, and when his words of love to her were still ringing in her ears—at such a moment as this could she think of giving up Brooke?

Such were the thoughts and feelings of these two.

Meanwhile Ashby, finding himself left alone by Dolores, stood for a while wondering who her friend might be; until at length, finding that she was beginning to give him a detailed history of her life, he looked around in despair. And he saw Katie standing alone, where she had been left by Harry, near the foot of the stairway; and as all the others were engaged in their own affairs, and, moreover, as his relations with Katie were of the most intimate kind, he saw no other course open to him than to approach her and converse with her. And at that moment he remembered that Katie had in her possession—perhaps in her pocket—a certain letter which he had written to her only a few days before, full of protestations of love; in which he informed her that he was going to travel with her in the same train, in the hope of seeing her at Burgos or Bayonne; in which he urged her to come to him, to be his wife; to set at defiance her hostile guardian, and to unite herself with him. This seemed strange to him now, when his mind was filled with thoughts of Dolores, and his heart was full of the love of Dolores. Even his resentment against her had passed away. She had allowed herself to indulge in a flirtation with his friend Rivers. Was that a crime? He, on the other hand, had lost all love for her, and had given all his heart to Dolores. Katie seemed to him now not repugnant as a false one, but merely pitiable as a weak, childlike character. The falsity now seemed rather on his part than on hers. He believed that Harry had gone much farther in treachery than Katie. Katie, he thought, was merely a weak-minded flirt; while Harry had become a traitor in allowing himself to fall in love with her. Even for Harry he could now make some allowances; and since he had found out his own feelings, he had less jealousy, and therefore less resentment against his former friend. As for jealousy, if he now had that feeling, it was all directed elsewhere—namely, toward that stranger whose sudden appearance had so engrossed Dolores.

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In such a state of mind as this Ashby advanced toward Katie. Now Katie had come down with the express purpose of seeing him, and with her mind full of a very pretty speech which she intended to make to him. But the sudden meeting of Harry with Talbot had raised other thoughts and feelings, which had driven her pretty speech altogether out of her mind. A bitter jealousy afflicted her tender heart. This lady was the Sydney Talbot of whom he had told her, and who had come all the way from England on this perilous journey to marry him. Would she now give him up? Impossible! And how could Harry escape her?

As Ashby approached, Katie therefore had but little thought of him. Ashby also thought less of her than of Dolores. Who was this stranger? he thought. Why was he so familiar? Why did Dolores leave him so abruptly? and why was she telling to this stranger the whole story of her life?

Thus Ashby and Katie met again.

Ashby had to say something, and so, as was natural, he took refuge in conventionalities.

'I hope,' said he, 'that no ill effects have arisen from this recent excitement.'

'Oh no,' said Katie, in an abstracted tone. She was trying to listen to Talbot's words. They did not sound pleasant.

Ashby also was trying to listen to Dolores. She seemed to him to be altogether too familiar.

'I'm very glad,' said Ashby. 'I was afraid that this excitement might have an injurious effect.'

(Dolores was still giving an account of herself. It was unworthy of her!)

'Oh no,' said Katie, 'not at all.'

She heard Harry speak in an apologetical manner. It was very hard to bear. Would he leave her for this lady?

There was now a pause.

Ashby and Katie were both listening with all their might to hear what was said by Dolores and by Harry respectively.

Ashby felt the necessity of saying something.

'Very fine weather,' said he.

'Oh, very fine,' said Katie.

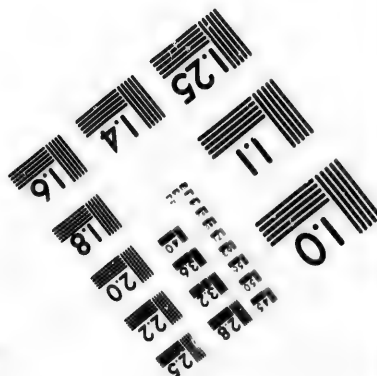
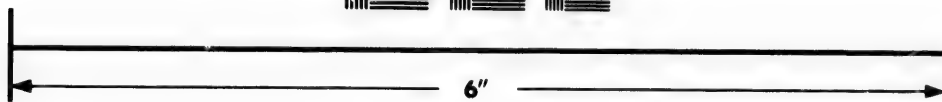
'A fine moon.'

'Oh, very fine.'

At this mention of the moon, each thought of those moonbeams which had streamed in through the narrow windows on those past few nights—nights so memorable to each; and each thought of them with the same feelings.

Ashby tried to find something new to say. He thought of the position in which they all were—its danger—their liability to recapture—the necessity of flight, and yet the difficulty of





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doing so—things which he and Dolores had just been considering.

‘This,’ said he, ‘is a very embarrassing position.’

Katie by this understood him to mean the relations which they bore to one another, and which had become somewhat confused by her affair with Harry. She thought this was Ashby’s way of putting it.

She sighed. She looked at Harry and Talbot. They seemed coming to an understanding. Harry was certainly making an explanation which seemed unnecessarily long. And here was Ashby hinting at an explanation with herself. She had forgotten all her fine speech with which she had come down. She knew not what to say. She only felt a jealous fear about Harry, and another fear about an explanation with Ashby.

Ashby meanwhile thought nothing about Katie, but was full of eagerness to learn what was going on between Dolores and Brooke.

And thus it was certainly an embarrassing situation.

There were three couples involved in this embarrassing situation, and among them all it is difficult to say which was most embarrassed. It was bad enough to meet with the old lover, but it was worse to feel that the eye of the new lover was upon them. Moreover, each new lover felt jealous of the old one; and the mind of each had thus to be distracted between two discordant anxieties. In short, it was, as Ashby had well said, a most embarrassing situation.

Suddenly, in the midst of all this, a figure entered the hall which attracted all eyes. It was a figure of commanding importance; a man rather elderly, in the uniform of a general-officer—all ablaze with gold. There was a universal shock at such an apparition. The first thought of everyone was that the castle had been captured by some new enemy—that this was the leader, and that they all were prisoners.

But one by one, to Ashby, Harry, Brooke; to Katie, Talbot, and Dolores—came the recognition of the fact that under this magnificent exterior lay concealed the person of their companion and friend, the venerable and the virtuous Russell.

‘I want to look after something,’ said he; and with these words he went into the room where he had first been confined—namely, the one opposite to that in which the recent ceremony had taken place.

CHAPTER LV.

HOW HARRY AND KATIE DISCUSS THE SITUATION, AND ASHBY TELLS DOLORES HER DUTY.

THE sudden appearance of Russell broke the spell which had rested upon all.

Talbot was the first to make a movement.

'Excuse me for a few moments,' said she. 'There are some wounded men inside who are in my care. I came out to get some water for them. I must make haste.'

Saying these words, she left Harry, and went to a corner of the apartment where there was a jar of water. Filling a vessel from this, she returned to the wounded.

Harry did not follow her.

Upon seeing this movement of Talbot, Katie withdrew from Ashby. Ashby did not seem to notice this, for he was still watching Dolores.

Dolores now remarked to Brooke that she was just at that time engaged in looking after the defences of the castle, for there was serious danger of an immediate attack by the enemy.

At this Brooke said nothing, but merely bowed, and followed Talbot to help her with the wounded men.

Dolores, upon this, cast a glance at Ashby and went out. Ashby immediately followed her.

Upon this, Harry approached Katie. Neither said a word, but, acting on one common impulse, they went upstairs together into the upper hall. As they thus went up, Russell came out of the other room, and, seeing them ascending the stairs, he followed them.

On reaching the top of the stairs, Harry and Katie stood, and Russell also stopped a little below. He wasn't proud. He was anxious for information. So he stood and listened to what they had to say.

The two stood there in silence for some time, until at length Katie spoke.

'Isn't this horrible?' said she, with a heavy sigh.

Harry gave another sigh responsive to hers.

'It's worse,' said Katie, 'than ever.'

Harry, with another sigh, allowed that it was.

'I can't stay here,' said Katie, 'in this place; and, what's more, I won't stay. I'm free now, and I've made up my mind to go away.'

'Will you?' said Harry, in an eager voice.

'Yes, I will,' said Katie decidedly; 'and I'll go all alone. You needn't come; for of course you'll stay.'

'Stay?' said Harry—'stay? and here—when you've gone away?'

'Oh yes,' said Katie; 'of course you'll stay here, with your dear Sydney!'

Harry sighed.

'But *I* won't stay,' continued Katie, after another pause; 'I'm going to leave; and I'll walk back to the railway all alone.'

'I think that would be a capital idea!' said Harry, in a tone of great animation.

At this Katie burst into tears.

Harry was now quite distracted. He caught her in his arms and kissed her over and over again.

'You don't understand,' said he. 'I mean it would be a good idea to go; but, of course, you shall not go alone.'

'Yes, I will go alone,' said Katie; 'all alone. You don't care for me, now that you've got your Sydney. You don't care for me a bit!'

'Care for you?' cried Harry; 'you're the only one, Katie, in all the world, that I do care for.'

Katie struggled away from his encircling arms.

'No,' said she; 'you're not speaking the truth. You'll leave me, and say those same words to your Sydney.'

'Bother Sydney!' cried Harry, in unfeigned vexation.

At this, Katie, whose head had been for a moment averted, now turned her tearful eyes on him, and Harry once more took her in his arms.

'But do you, after all,' said she—'do you, after all, care for me just a little bit, Harry?'

'Care for you?' cried Harry, with headlong impetuosity. 'I swear, Katie, that I love you better than all the world. I will give up everything for you. Will you do as much for me?'

'Why—why—how can I help it?' said Katie.

At this reply Harry kissed her again.

'You—you—offered your life for me,' said Katie, in tearful agitation; 'and didn't I almost give my life for you, you dear old boy? You don't know all yet. You don't know that it was for your sake only, and to save you from death, that I consented to sacrifice myself to that awful man.'

Katie now told Harry the whole story, and the effect of this narration was only to intensify the ardent love of this volatile youth. While he had been face to face with Talbot, he had undergone a severe struggle from conflicting emotions and impulses. But, now Katie was before him, Talbot was present no longer; and Katie was so sweet, so tender, so trustful, and, above all, she had such a story to tell, that he could not resist. Talbot's claims on him became less and less perceptible in those new ones

which Kate presented ; and so the consequence was that he yielded up everything—his honour, his loyalty, and his duty.

'Katie,' said he, as he pressed her in his arms, 'I love you alone—I'll give up all for you. Let us fly from this place ; let us fly ! Let us not wait here where these other people are.'

'Fly ?' said Katie ; 'where ?'

'Yes ; fly !'

'But how can we get out ? Shall we go out boldly through the gate ?'

Suddenly some one came between them, and a voice chimed into the conversation.

'Yes,' said the voice, 'fly ! That's the ticket. There's a devil here—a she-devil. I'll show you the way out. If you want to get off without Ashby seeing you, I'll show you how ; I know the way. It's a secret passage. That's how I escaped the last time ; and I'll take you to it when it gets dark.'

It was Russell who had thus interposed. Harry and Katie showed no resentment whatever at his intrusion, but caught at his suggestion. Russell alluded with clumsy and rather vulgar playfulness to their tender relations, and offered, as guardian, to give Katie away the moment they should find a parson.

Meanwhile Dolores had gone out into the courtyard, followed by Ashby. There they stopped, and looked at one another in silence.

'Who's that fellow ?' said Ashby at last.

Dolores explained that he was a friend of hers who had been of great help in Cuba. She did not tell how tender their relations had been.

'H'm !' said Ashby. 'Never heard of him before. You seemed very intimate.'

'He saved my life,' said Dolores.

'Saved your life ?'

Dolores sighed.

Then more of her story escaped her. At last the whole truth came out.

'What ?' said Ashby ; 'and so you were engaged. In fact, the fellow is an old lover.'

Dolores said nothing, but looked at Ashby with mournful inquiry, as though appealing to him to know what she ought to do.

'How did he get here ?' asked Ashby calmly.

'He has been seeking for me all these years, and traced me here, and was captured.'

'H'm ! that's devotion,' said Ashby. 'And who's his friend—the girl that was disguised as priest ?'

'I don't know.'

'So she's a girl,' said Ashby ; 'and so that's the reason she

wouldn't marry Lopez and Katie. A most infernally pretty girl. Who is she, did you say ?

'I don't know.'

'Didn't your—your friend tell you ?

'No.'

It may be supposed that Ashby should have known Brooke's feelings towards this 'priest' by his devotion to her in saving her life. But it was not so. Brooke's desperate act in flinging himself before Lopez seemed to Ashby merely an accident consequent upon his struggle with his captors. Besides, the attack of Dolores and her six Carlists had followed so closely upon this, that all had become confused together.

While Ashby had been asking these few questions, Dolores remained looking at him with that same mournful inquiry. Ashby noticed it, for he looked at her several times, though each time he looked away elsewhere. He was turning over all this in his mind.

At length he looked at her once more, and took her hands in his.

'Dolores,' said he, 'I have made up my mind.'

'What ?' said she, in a faint voice, looking up at him in awful suspense.

'I will not give you up ! That's decided. You must dismiss the idea from your mind.'

In an instant the shadow of anxiety fled from the face of Dolores, followed by a flash of joy like a sunbeam. She said not a word, but Ashby saw that rush of happiness, and all his own nature responded.

'You must come with me,' said he. 'That fellow may look out for himself.'

'But—but—' said Dolores. She paused.

'What ?

'We—we—are—engaged.'

'Pooh !' said Ashby. 'That's an old story.'

'But—but—'

'Well ?' said Ashby impatiently, as she paused.

'He—he—saved my life once.'

'He be hanged !' said Ashby. 'I'll save your life fifty times. You mustn't think of that man again. Do you hear, Dolores ?

'Yes,' said Dolores meekly ; 'but I only want to satisfy my conscience, and find out my duty.'

'Conscience ? Duty ? Ah !' repeated Ashby. 'Well, then, I'll tell you what to think of—think of *me* ! Here was I, engaged to that English maiden. You have won my love. You have made me indifferent to her. You have made my love grow stronger and stronger every moment, until now I'm ready to give up everything for you. Your duty, therefore, is to be true to me, as I will be true to you.'

Dolores looked up again with her face in a rapture of gladness, and Ashby pressed her hands more closely in his. Then they walked away to inspect the fortifications.

CHAPTER LVI.

IN WHICH THERE IS A TERRIBLE CALAMITY.

RUSSELL's advent among the embarrassed lovers can easily be explained. Seated at the gate in the uniform of a general, with gorgeous array of blue and gold, with a sword in his manly hand, and armed warriors around him, his martial soul had gradually lost its terrors, and his mind was at leisure to think of other things.

First among these other things was that precious package which he had concealed. Now was the time for him to look them up and regain possession. None but friends were now in the castle. Those bonds were now safer in his own possession than anywhere else, and never could he hope for a better chance than this. As for Rita, she must have fled, he thought, with the other fugitives, and with her had fled his worst fear.

With such thoughts as these, the martial Russell sheathed his warlike sword and walked back again toward the castle. Here he entered the hall where the others were talking, and, passing through, entered the well-remembered room where he had been confined. He looked all around. He was alone. He walked to the chimney. He looked up. Through the broad opening at the top he saw the sky. In the gloom of the shaft he saw also that opening in which he had placed the precious parcel.

All seemed as it had been, and he felt convinced that his papers were safe. Further examination, however, was, just now, not advisable. He would have to light a torch, and some of his friends might come in just as he was going up or coming down. So he concluded to defer his search until they had gone out of the way a little, until which time the package would be quite safe. In the meantime he thought he would go back and hear what they were all talking about.

Coming back again, he saw them all going in different directions, and, as a matter of course, he followed those who were nearest and dearest, namely, Katie and Harry. He stood and listened with a benignant smile to their loving words. He gazed complacently upon their outrageous and unbounded spooning. He had no objection now to anyone whom Katie might choose. To Ashby he felt repugnance on account of

former quarrels, but to Harry none whatever. Even to Ashby he would have yielded, for prejudices die out quickly in a Castle of Spain. And so, as we have seen, the good Russell interrupted the happy lovers in a paternal way, and did the 'heavy father' to perfection—with outstretched hands, moistened eyes, and 'Bless you, bless you, my children!'

The subject of flight was already before them, and this was for Russell the most acceptable possible. He felt that he could give valuable information, since he himself had been a fugitive. Every step of the way was well remembered by him. In a few minutes he had made them acquainted with the story of his former escape, and the adventurous Harry at once decided that this would be the very way by which he could carry off Katie and himself from their embarrassing surroundings. For various reasons he wished to go away in a quiet, unobtrusive manner, without ostentation or vain display, and in no other way could he do it so effectually as in this.

Harry at once decided that his best course would be to spend the hours of closing day in making himself acquainted with this passage. He did not feel inclined to be altogether dependent upon Russell. Circumstances might arise which might make it desirable to fly without him. That good man might become suddenly unwell, or there might be an attack by the enemy, or other things might occur, under any of which circumstances Harry would have to rely upon himself alone.

Russell had no objections; in fact, he himself preferred going over the way once more. About this there was no difficulty. There were very few in the castle, and these had no idea of watching each other; in fact, each party seemed only too anxious to keep out of the other's way.

Katie now retired to that room which she had last occupied, and Harry went off with Russell. The daylight befriended them so that they were able to find their way along the lower passages, until at length they came to the opening under the arch of the ruined bridge. Here they both went down one side of the chasm and up the other until they both reached the tower. Harry was delighted with this discovery, and felt fully capable of traversing the path himself, even in the darkest night; while Russell, though a little out of breath, was quite willing to bear the fatigue in return for the additional knowledge he had gained.

On regaining the castle, Harry went to tell Katie the result, and to prepare her for their coming flight.

Russell now had leisure to attend to the great work of securing the hidden treasure. He decided that he ought to do this in perfect secrecy, so that none of his friends should know where he was going, or even suspect it.

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First of all, he followed Harry to the upper story, where he took an affectionate leave of him. Then he prowled about until he discovered Ashby, who was with Dolores in a remote part of the courtyard. The six Carlists were still at the gate. The other two inmates of the castle, namely, Brooke and Talbot, were in the room in which the recent stormy events had taken place. They had been attending to the wounds of the prisoners, and were still so engaged that they did not look up as Russell entered. He said nothing, but hastily retreated, and went into the opposite room—the very one in which he was to conduct his operations. But he was too cautious to begin just yet; so he waited, and at length had the satisfaction of seeing these two go downstairs and out of the castle.

And now at last the time had come. There was no eye to behold him, and no one to suspect.

An old torch was in the fireplace. This he picked up, and then going back to the door, looked all around stealthily and warily. All was still.

Thereupon he returned. His manly heart was throbbing fast—violently, even painfully. The sense of loneliness was oppressive. Had his purpose been less important, he would certainly have turned and fled. But too much was at stake. Before him there arose the vision of that vast treasure—thirty thousand pounds—and its attraction was irresistible. He must go forward; and now was the time to win, or never.

He stood for a moment gathering up his courage.

What if Rita should be concealed somewhere up there!

Such was the awful thought that suddenly occurred to him and made him quail.

The idea suggested itself of going back to Harry and getting his aid. But no, that would never do. He would let it be supposed that these bonds had been taken from him. If he were to tell his secret to Harry, all would be lost. No; he must go, and alone.

Once more he went to the door and listened. All was still.

He now nerved himself up for a supreme effort. If he were to delay any longer, some of them would be sure to return. Now or never.

He struck a match against the stone floor. It kindled.

In another moment the torch was blazing brightly; and, holding this in one hand, Russell used his other hand to clamber up the projecting stones.

Up he went, higher and higher.

And now he reached the opening, and his knee was resting upon it, and he was just about to raise the torch so as to peer in.

At that instant there was a sudden rush, and a spring, that sent a thrill of sharp agony to his heart. A pair of strong arms were flung about him. The torch fell, and the smoke blinded his eyes. He felt himself dragged forward helplessly into the gloomy hole, while a fierce whisper hissed into his despairing ears words that made him almost die out of sheer fright :

'H-h ! base traitor, I haifa you ! I haifa you ! You salla not scapp... from Rita again !'

At this Russell gave a wild, long, piercing yell, and fainted.

CHAPTER LVII.

IN WHICH BROOKE AND TALBOT PREPARE TO BID EACH OTHER AN ETERNAL FAREWELL.

ON turning away from that eventful meeting with old friends, both Brooke and Talbot felt very greatly depressed, and neither could say a word. This feeling was experienced by both to an equal degree ; and neither of them could see any possible way out of this new difficulty that could commend itself to an honourable mind.

The conversation with Harry had quite overwhelmed Talbot. He had been so eager to explain, and the explanations had shown such fidelity on his part, he had seemed so true, and his vindication had been so complete, that she had not one word to say. For the fact remained plain before her mind that the cause of his failing to receive her at Barcelona was his very eagerness to meet her, which had sent him flying in all haste to England. If he had ever been in fault, the fault was one which had arisen from excess of love. To a generous mind like Talbot's this was a most distressing thought.

Still, there was another thought which was worse, and that was this—namely, that Harry could no longer satisfy her. Whether she had ever really loved him or not, she did not now stop to inquire, nor was such an inquiry worth making. It was only too evident now that Harry had declined to nothingness, and less than nothingness, in her heart, and that in the course of the tragical events of the last few days Brooke had grown to be more than all the world to her.

The feelings and thoughts of Brooke were of the same description. It had seemed to him that Dolores had been faithful ; and as he had all along felt firmly convinced of her passionate love for himself and unalterable fidelity, it never entered into his head now to suspect any change in her. At the same time, he felt that, whether he had ever loved her formerly or not, he certainly

had no feeling of love for her now ; for Talbot had utterly effaced that former image, and all the world would now be as nothing to him without Talbot.

For some time they devoted themselves to the wounded men, and then, having finished this task, they retreated to the farthest end of the room. Here there was a rude bench, upon which they seated themselves, and remained thus for a long time in utter silence.

'You saw my meeting with—with that—young lady,' said Brooke at last. 'Did you understand who it was? It was—Dolores.'

'I know,' said Talbot, with a heavy sigh. 'And did you observe my meeting with that gentleman? Did you understand that?'

'What?' cried Brooke, in amazement at the suggestion which was conveyed by Talbot's words. He had not had leisure to notice or think of anyone except Dolores.

'It was Mr. Rivers,' said Talbot.

'The devil!' cried Brooke, with a groan.

At this Talbot very properly said nothing.

'Well,' said Brooke, after a long pause, 'I didn't know that things could possibly be more infernally embarrassing or more confoundedly complicated than they were; but this is certainly a little beyond what I dreamed of. And—and——'

He turned with a despairing look and took Talbot's hand.

'What, Brooke?'

'Am—am I—to—to—congratulate you—and all that?' he stammered.

'What!' said Talbot reproachfully.

Brooke was silent.

'Oh, Brooke,' said Talbot, 'what are we to do?'

'Give it up,' said Brooke, in a dismal voice.

'This,' continued Talbot, 'is worse than when we were prisoners, and dying by turns for one another.'

'I wish,' said Brooke, 'that I had died when I wanted to.'

'And must we now give one another up?' sighed Talbot.

'Don't see what else we can do,' said Brooke. 'We've got to keep our confounded promises.'

'What promises, Brooke?'

'I don't know.'

'Brooke?'

'What?'

'What ought I to do?'

'I don't know.'

'Ought I to keep my promise?'

'Which promise?'

'Why, my promise to—to Mr. Rivers?'

'D—n Mr. Rivers!' growled Brooke, turning away.

'That,' said Talbot mildly, 'is not an answer to my question.'

'But how do I know?' said Brooke in a voice like a wailing child.

'How can I? how can I?' cried Talbot. 'And when *you* are here—*you*, Brooke, who know all my heart! Can I give you up? I cannot! You may give me up, if you like.'

'Why don't you say, if I *can*?' said Brooke.

'Oh—any way,' said Talbot wearily.

There was another silence.

'Marry *him*?' cried Talbot at last, breaking the silence with vehement abruptness. 'I cannot! I cannot! It would be wicked. I should desecrate the holy sacrament. I could not utter that vow before the holy altar. Never! Yet I can't stay here, where *he* is. He will be wishing to see me. He will be coming soon—he may be coming now. I will *not* see him. I will not speak with him again. I will write to him. I will leave this place, and at once.'

'Leave this place!' repeated Brooke. 'Where can you go?'

'Why, I'll go home,' said Talbot firmly.

'Home?'

'Yes.'

'How can you? You don't know the way.'

'I know one place where I can go—to that tower—that sweet tower; it is not far away; it must be easy to get there. I will go there—there, Brooke, where I first became acquainted with you; and then—'

Here Talbot paused, and turned away her head.

'But you can't live there,' said Brooke in a harsh voice.

'I can find my way back to the road,' said Talbot in a tremulous tone—'to the road where I first met you, Brooke; and then—why, then I shall be no worse off than when you found me and assisted me.'

'It's all nonsense,' said Brooke; 'you can't go alone.'

'Yes, I can.'

'You'll be taken prisoner.'

'I don't care.'

'Or, if not, you'll die of starvation.'

'Very well,' said Talbot in a calm voice, and looking at Brooke out of serene eyes, with a face from which all traces of emotion had departed—'very well; I have already showed that I am not afraid of death; and death by starvation is not more terrible than death by bullets.'

Brooke looked at her for a moment in silence, and then said:

'You are not in earnest?'

'I am in earnest,' said Talbot, looking at him fixedly, and speaking in a resolute tone—'I am in earnest, and I mean to go this very night.'

Brooke looked away, drew a long breath, and subsided into silence.

'How can you find the way?' he asked at length, in a gruff voice, and without looking up.

'I don't know,' said Talbot; 'I can try again, as I tried before.'

Brooke looked up hastily, then looked away, and finally said:

'I think, Talbot, you might ask me to show you the way.'

At this Talbot's face flushed, and all her expression was suddenly changed from one of dull dejection to animation and delight.

'Will you?' she asked breathlessly.

'Oh yes,' said Brooke, 'that isn't much to do. Oh yes, I can easily show you the way to the tower. After all, it is as safe there as here; and if you are determined to go, why, we can start, you know—at any time, you know.'

'But will you—can you—will you, really?' said Talbot, who seemed quite overwhelmed at this unexpected offer. 'Then you have your human weakness, after all, have you, Brooke? You will not sacrifice me to a punctilio, will you? you will not let your poor Talbot go away all alone?'

'No,' said Brooke softly, 'I will not let my Talbot go away all alone.'

Talbot cast a swift glance at him, as if to read his soul. Brooke's eye met hers, but only for an instant. Then he looked away. Again there was quick and active within him that old vigilant feeling that kept him on guard against being surprised and overpowered by passion. Within his heart there had already been a fierce struggle between love and honour. Love had once conquered, and that completely; but the appearance of Dolores had roused his conscience, and made him once more aware of the bond that lay in his plighted word. Could he again break that word? Could he sacrifice his honour for good almost in the very presence of her whom he supposed to be his loving and faithful Dolores? Could he do such a deed as this, and sully his soul even for Talbot? Yet, on the other hand, how could he bring himself to give her up? Give her up—the 'lad Talbot,' whom he loved as he had never loved any other human being! How could he? And thus love drew him impetuously in one direction, while duty sternly and imperiously drove him back; and so there went on in the breast of this newspaper correspondent a struggle the like of which does not often come within the experience of gentlemen of the press.

'You will see me as far as the tower?' said Talbot pathetically.

'Yes,' murmured Brooke.

'And there,' continued Talbot, in the same tone, 'we can say to one another our last farewells.'

Brooke said nothing. The struggle still raged within him, and

was as far from a decisive end as ever. The prospect of parting with Talbot filled him with a sense of horrible desolation, and the one idea now in his mind was that of accompanying her wherever she might go. He did not look far into the future. His plans were bounded by that tower to which Talbot was going. This much he might do without any hesitation. It seemed to him no more than Talbot's due. She only wanted to go as far as that. She wished to be out of the reach of Rivers. She didn't know the way there. He could certainly help her thus far; in fact, it would be impossible for him not to do that much. If Dolores herself were present, he thought, she could not object; in fact, she could do nothing else but approve.

Silence now followed, which lasted for some time, and at length Talbot said, with a heavy sigh:

'How strange it is, and how sad! isn't it, Brooke?'

'What?' said Brooke.

'To bid good-bye.'

Brooke was silent.

'To bid good-bye,' repeated Talbot, 'and never meet again!'

Brooke drew a long breath, looked at Talbot, and then looked away.

'Shall we Brooke?' asked Talbot.

'Shall we what?' said Brooke harshly.

'Shall we ever meet again?'

'How do I know?' said Brooke snappishly.

'And yet you gave your life for me,' said Talbot pensively.

'I didn't,' said Brooke. 'It was you that gave your life for me.'

'The offer was made,' said Talbot mournfully, 'but it wasn't accepted. I wish now that the offer had been accepted.'

Brooke raised his head and looked at her with his pale, haggard face, whereon was still the impression of that great agony through which he had so lately passed. He looked at her with all his unspeakable love in his earnest, yearning gaze.

'Do you really wish that, Talbot?'

'I do,' said she sadly.

'Oh, my darling!' cried Brooke—'my own love, and my only love! What shall I do? Help me to decide.'

He caught her in his arms, and held her pressed convulsively to his heart, while Talbot laid her head on his shoulder and wept.

At length they rose to go.

Brooke was conscious of a sense of profound relief as he went out of the castle and away from Dolores.

On reaching the gate, Brooke explained to the guard that he and the lady were going out for a little walk.

The guard suggested that there might be danger.

Brooke said that he was not going far away, and that he would be back. In this he was not deceiving them, for he himself thought that he would be coming back again. He had a vague idea of keeping Talbot in the tower, and conveying her food, etc., from the castle, as he had done once before.

He now passed through the gates, accompanied by Talbot. The course which he took was the same that he had taken on the occasion of his first visit to the Carlists in his disguise of priest. After walking for some distance they descended into the chasm, and at length reached the bottom. By this time it was dusk, and twilight was coming on rapidly.

They then began the ascent, and reached the tower without any difficulty.

Here they passed to take breath.

But no sooner had they stood still than they were aware of a noise without. It was a noise rather distant, yet well defined, and sounded as if a multitude were approaching the place.

'Some one's coming,' said Talbot.

'Yes,' said Brooke: 'we must go back.'

They hurried back. But as they stood at the opening they heard something which once more startled them.

There were voices and footsteps down the chasm, as of some one coming up the pathway.

'We are pursued!' said Brooke.

'We are captured!' said Talbot; and then she added, as she took Brooke's hand in hers, 'But oh, Brooke, how I should love to be captured, if you are only captured with me!'

Brooke said nothing, but a thrill of joy passed through him at the thought.

CHAPTER LVIII.

IN WHICH SOME OLD FRIENDS REAPPEAR.

DOLORES and Ashby had experienced none of that inner conflict that had disturbed the souls of Brooke and Talbot, for Ashby had been prompt in decision, and had taken all responsibility from Dolores. She meekly acquiesced in his decision, was all the happier for it, and prepared with the briskness of a bird to carry out their purpose of flight. She led Ashby down by the same way through which she had formerly conducted 'his Majesty,' starting from that lower room in which Ashby had been confined. Had she gone from one of the upper rooms, they might, perhaps, have encountered the lurking Rita, and thus have rescued the

unhappy Russell from his vengeful captor and from his coming woe. But such was not to be their lot. It was from the lower room that they started ; and on they went, to the no small amazement of Ashby, through all those intricate ways, until at length they emerged from the interior, and found themselves in the chasm. Here the moon was shining, as it had been during all the eventful days in which all these wonderful and authentic adventures had been taking place, and gave them ample light by which to find the path. Their way lay along the lower part of the chasm, where the brook was foaming and bubbling and dashing on its way. Before long they reached the place where the path ascended toward the tower. Up this they proceeded.

As they went up they heard voices. Thus far they had been talking with one another quite merrily and carelessly, but these sounds at once arrested them. They stopped for a moment and listened in deep anxiety.

The sound of the voices seemed to draw nearer, and to come up from some point in the pathway behind them, as though others were advancing in the same direction.

'We are pursued,' said Dolores.

'Who would pursue us?' said Ashby.

'Mr. Brooke,' said Dolores, in a tone of alarm. 'It must be Mr. Brooke. He has been looking for me. He has seen us, and is pursuing us.'

Ashby muttered a curse.

'Confound him !' said he. 'Let him keep his distance ! We must hurry on faster.'

They hurried on.

In a few moments they had reached the tower. Inside that tower were Brooke and Talbot, who had reached it some time before, and now heard the sounds made by these new-comers, though the darkness of the interior prevented them from seeing who they were. On entering, Dolores drew Ashby carefully on one side. Brooke and Talbot waited in breathless suspense.

But now other sounds startled the occupants of the tower--the sounds as of an advancing crowd. Dolores clung in terror to Ashby, and drew him still farther on one side.

They were caught--that was plain. They could neither advance nor retreat ; for now already they heard new-comers at the opening through which they had just passed. They shrank back still farther, and Dolores clung more closely to Ashby.

These new-comers, however, were not very formidable. They were merely Harry and Katie.

Harry had waited for some time in expectation of being joined by Russell. To his surprise, that worthy person did not put in an appearance. He could not account for this, and finally concluded that Russell must have gone ahead, so as to take his time

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about it and save himself by daylight. In this belief Harry resolved to delay no longer, and, congratulating himself that he knew the way so well, he started off with Katie.

He went with all the caution in the world, first reconnoitring to see that no one was within view, and then, on reaching the side-door which gave entrance to the cellars, he cautioned Katie to keep silence. In this way they went on silently enough, until they emerged from the opening. Then they began to descend the chasm, and here Harry felt safe. On their way down and up they talked and laughed quite freely, and these were the voices which had startled their predecessors.

At length they reached the tower and clambered in. The moment they found themselves inside they were startled by those noises which had already terrified the others, and which had now drawn much nearer.

Katie gave a low cry of terror, and stood trembling in every limb.

Harry was quite bewildered at this sudden and unexpected shock. For a moment he thought of flight ; but that was impossible, for Katie, in her terror, was almost fainting, and he had to support her while she clung breathlessly to him. And so they stood, unable to move.

The noises were now just outside—voices, cries, songs, and wild laughter—all the indications of a lawless crowd.

Suddenly some one burst inside.

'Ha !' he cried, in Spanish, 'here it is, but it's all dark. Bring lights, some one. We must wait here till the others come round to the front ; but there's no reason why we shouldn't have lights. We can't be seen from the castle : the walls here are too thick to be transparent. It's just the place for a little supper.'

A number of others now came forward and entered. The fugitives stood clinging to one another as before, expecting the worst, and awaiting with intense anxiety the moment when lights would be introduced.

There was now the flash of sudden flames—some of them were striking matches. The flames leaped forth, and soon half a dozen torches were kindled, and then, blazing and smoking, they were held aloft, throwing a bright light upon the whole interior ; while those who held them looked around without any other purpose, just then, than to find some convenient place where they might place them, so as to save themselves the trouble of holding them.

In that one instant the whole scene stood revealed.

There stood Brooke, with Talbot clinging to him ; there Harry, with his arms round Katie ; and there Ashby, supporting Dolores. And as Ashby and Harry stared at these noisy new-comers, they saw the familiar face of no less a person than 'his Majesty.'

At this sight they were filled with amazement and consternation. Yet their amazement, great though it may have been, was not greater than that of 'his Majesty.' For an instant he stood like one transfixed, and then exclaimed, in that peculiar English which he spoke:

'Howly Moses! but this bates the worruld!' and then stood staring at each of them.

At this exclamation Katie started. She recognised the voice at once; and, strange to say, all her terror fled. From that man she felt as if there was nothing to fear. She looked up, and showed her sweet face all smiles, with all its anxiety and all its terror vanished. Dolores also heard the English words, and looked up in surprise, recognising at the first glance that familiar face. Harry and Ashby made the same discovery.

But there were other discoveries to be made. Their eyes, as the lights shone around, took in the whole scene; and it was with the deepest dismay and confusion that, on looking around, each one caught sight of his, or her, old lover; and, what was more, the feeling of each one was, that the other had come in pursuit, to claim that vow which each was breaking.

Henry saw Talbot, and felt sure that she had come after him to demand a new explanation, and to reproach him for this new perfidy. She had suffered, he felt, wrongs that were intolerable at his hands, and his heart sank within him at this new meeting. He seemed to himself base beyond all expression, and no words could be found with which he might excuse himself.

Brooke saw Dolores, and his only thought was that she had suspected him, had watched him, had tracked him, and had now come to overwhelm him with dishonour; and he felt that he must be dumb before her.

Ashby saw Katie, and thought that she had surely come in pursuit of him; that perhaps his suspicions had been unfounded; that she loved him; that she had only been trifling with Harry, and had come to tear him from Dolores.

Talbot saw Harry with guilty terror. She had fled from him, and intentionally. He had pursued; he had come to claim her hand—her promised hand!

Dolores saw Brooke with the same feelings. She knew him as the chivalrous American who had saved her life, and that of her mother in their direst need; who had won her heart and the promise of her hand. She had broken her word—she had fled. What now? With what eyes could she look at him! With what words could she speak to him?

Katie's face had lightened up with joy at the sight of 'his Majesty,' but the moment afterward it clouded over with fear and apprehension at the sight of Ashby. 'Tis conscience doth make cowards of us all,' and conscience told her that she had

treated Ashby very, very badly, and that he had followed her to make her keep her plighted word. And so she only clung to Harry more closely than ever.

And so, in fact, did the other couples. They all clung to one another more closely than ever. There was a moment of embarrassment—intense, awful, tremendous.

The deep silence was broken by the voice of 'his Majesty.'

'Hersilf!' he cried, with his eyes fixed on Katie—'hersilf! begorra, it's hersilf! Shure an' it is! an' oh, but it's mesilf that's the lucky man this day! An' shure, an' may I dhrop dead if I iver saw sich a mayting as this! Shure, ye've forgotten all about my offer av the crown av Spain, an' the sceptre, an' the throne. Begorra, ye've given up all that same for that bit av a boy that's a howldin' av ye. An' shure, we're all together again, so we are. Here's welcome to yez all—Messrs. Rivers, an' Ashby, an' the ladies, one an' all! Niver fear, I'll take good care av yez this toime! Only, what's become av Lord Russell? Begorra, it's mesilf that 'ud loike to have another look at that same!'

Talking in this way, with frequent pauses, 'his Majesty' succeeded in expressing his feelings, which had at first seemed quite too strong for utterance.

Meanwhile, the soldiers who had been inspecting the interior had found convenient places for fixing the torches, which now flared up, throwing a bright light around, and filling the tower with smoke.

During all this time the prisoners had been agitated by various feelings. Harry and Ashby saw in 'his Majesty' a remorseless brigand, whose only idea was plunder, and who would now hold them to ransom as before. They despaired of escape. This new capture seemed far worse than the former one, yet each one thought less of himself than of that dear one whom he had tried to save. Thus Harry clung to Katie, and Ashby clung to Dolores more closely than ever. Brooke and Talbot, on the contrary, had less fear, yet they had anxiety. Brooke recognised in 'his Majesty' the unscrupulous Carlist whom he had visited, and was somewhat uneasy about a recognition; while Talbot, seeing his uneasiness, felt something like fear herself.

Yet, in the midst of all this, they all alike made one discovery. It was this: each one saw that his or her old love had become strangely indifferent.

Harry saw that Talbot was clinging to that strange man whom he had never seen before, but who now, as he thought, seemed uncommonly sweet on her.

Brooke saw that Dolores was clinging for support to another strange man. She had evidently no thought for him.

Ashby saw at once that Katie thought of no one but Harry Rivers.

Talbot saw that Harry was devoted to that lady whom he was so assiduously supporting and consoling. She was utterly amazed at the discovery, yet inexpressibly glad.

Dolores, in her delight, saw that Brooke took no notice of herself, but devoted himself to the lady with him, and in such a fervent manner that she understood it all without being told.

Katie also saw that Ashby had forgotten all about her, and thought of nothing but Dolores.

And at this discovery, which flashed almost simultaneously upon them, each one felt the most inexpressible joy. At the same time the whole truth came upon them. Each one, instead of pursuing the other, had been trying to fly. Each lover had found a new and more congenial friend, and with this dear friend had left the castle. Each one felt equally guilty, yet equally glad; but then, as to guilt, there was Brooke, who did not feel guilty at all—oh, bless you, no!—he had only come with Talbot *as far as the tower!*

In the midst of all this, Harry and Ashby and Brooke were amazed at the Irish brogue of the Carlist chief, who had formerly spoken to them in Spanish.

And now, while they were thus wondering, who should come in but a certain female in a very peculiar dress; for this female wore what looked like a military cloak, and she wore, also, an officer's 'kepi,' which was perched on the top of her chignon; which female took a glance around, and then exclaimed:

'Well, goodness gracious me! I never! Did I ever! No, never!'

'Auntie!' screamed Katie, and with this she rushed toward the aforesaid female, who was no other than Mrs. Russell. She flung her arms around that lady, and almost smothered her with kisses.

'Dear child!' said Mrs. Russell, 'how impetuous you are! but it's natural—it's touching—it's grateful—we deserve it, dear. We came to seek and to save. Bless you, my child, and may you be happy! "His Majesty" has a tender heart, and often talks of you. We also cherish for you a fond affection, child; but in future try to be a little less boisterous, and respect the majesty of Spain.'

At this reception Katie was quite bewildered. It was only by a strong effort that she could comprehend it. She then recalled that old nonsense with which she had amused herself when she had suggested that Mrs. Russell should marry 'his Majesty'; but now a great terror seized her: was it possible that Mrs. Russell had done such a thing?

'Oh, auntie!' she said; 'oh, auntie? you haven't—you haven't—done—done it?'

'Done it!' said Mrs. Russell, who seemed at once to understand

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her ; 'no, child—not yet ; but as soon as the affairs of State will allow, "his Majesty" says that the ceremony shall be performed ; after which comes the coronation, you know, and then, dear, I shall be Queen, and you may be princess, and may marry the proudest of all the Spanish chivalry.'

At this Katie was so terrified that she did not know what to say. The only thought she had was that 'auntie' had gone raving mad. She knew that Mr. Russell was alive and well, for she had seen him only a short time before. The old joke about marrying 'his Majesty' had been almost forgotten by her ; and to find 'auntie' now as full as ever of that nonsensical piece of ambition was inexpressibly shocking to her. Yet she did not know what to say. To disabuse her seemed impossible. She did not dare to tell her that Mr. Russell was alive ; it might be dangerous. 'Auntie' had so set her mind upon this insane project that any attempt to thwart her would certainly draw down vengeance upon the head of the one who should dare to attempt it. That one certainly was not Katie. She liked, as far as possible, to have things move on smoothly around her ; and so the only thought she now had was to chime in with 'auntie's' fancy ; to humour her, as one would humour an insane person, and to hope that something might turn up in time to prevent anything 'dreadful.'

In this state of mind Katie went on talking with 'auntie.' But 'auntie' was hard to humour ; she was altogether too grand and lofty for little Katie. In fancy she already wore a crown, and talked of the throne, the sceptre, and the majesty of Spain as though they had always been her private property.

'I've been two or three days,' said she, 'with "his Majesty." He has been most kind. His royal will is that I should wear this hat. Do you think it is becoming ? Under other circumstances, I should be talked about, I know ; but where the welfare of Spain is concerned, I don't care for public opinion. When I am seated on the throne all will be explained.'

At such a torrent as this poor Katie could only take refuge in silence.

CHAPTER LIX.

HOW A SURPRISE-PARTY IS VERY MUCH SURPRISED.

DURING these remarks 'his Majesty' had been fumbling, with a thoughtful expression, in his coat-pocket, as though trying to extricate something, the bulk of which prevented it from being drawn forth without some difficulty; and as he tugged and fumbled he began to speak.

'I came here,' said he, 'on a surprise-party, an' begorra I niver was so surprised in my loife, so I wasn't. Au' be the same token, as it's a long march we've had, an' as we've got to wait here an hour or so, an' as we're on the ave av an attack an' may niver live to see another day, shure there's ivery raison in loife'—and with this he fumbled still more vigorously in his pocket—'why'—he gave a thrust and a pull—'why we should all wet our whistles'—he gave a series of violent twists—'wid a dhrop av somethin' warrum;' and with this he succeeded in getting the object of his attempts extricated from his pocket, and proudly displayed before the eyes of the company a black junk-bottle.

The others looked at this with some surprise, but no other feeling. The whole proceeding seemed to them to show an ill-timed levity; and if it was serious, it certainly seemed very bad taste. But 'his Royal Majesty' was in a very gracious mood, and continued to run on in his most gay and affable strain. He wandered round among the company and offered the bottle to each in turn. When they all refused he seemed both surprised and hurt.

'Shure it's whisky, so it is,' he said, as though that would remove all objections; but this information did not produce any effect. 'Perhaps it's a tumbler ye'll be wantin',' said he. 'Well, well, we're sorry we haven't got one; but if ye'll take a taste out av the bottle ye'll foind it mighty convaynient.'

Here the monarch paused, and, raising the bottle to his own royal lips, took a long draught. As he swallowed the liquid his eyes closed and his face assumed an expression of rapture. He then offered it to all once more, and mourned over them because they refused.

'Oh, but it's the divoine dhrink!' said he. Then he grew merrier, and began to sing:

" Oh, Shakspeare, Homer, an' all the poets
Have sung for ages the praise av woine;
But if they iver had tasted whisky,
They'd have called it the only dhrink divoine.

“ Oh, wud ye have a receipt for toddy ?
 Av whisky ye take a quart, I think ;
 Thin out av a pint av bilin' wather
 Ivery dhrop ye add will spile the dhrink ! ”

Ashby had been talking with Dolores for some time. He now came forward, Dolores hanging on his arm.

‘ Sir,’ said he to ‘ his Majesty,’ ‘ I suppose we must again consider ourselves your prisoners ? ’

‘ Divvle a doubt av it,’ said ‘ his Majesty ’ with a wink at Dolores.

‘ The other time,’ said Ashby, ‘ you named a ransom, and said that on the payment of that sum you would allow us our liberty. Will you now name a sum again—some sum that I can pay ? I engage to have it in less than a week, provided that you send this lady in safety to Vittoria. She can procure the money for me, and until then I shall remain your prisoner.’

‘ Well, that’s fair,’ said ‘ his Majesty.’

‘ Will you do it ? ’

‘ Begorra, I will.’

‘ Will you name the sum ? ’

‘ I’ll think about it.’

At this Ashby went back with Dolores to his former position, and they resumed their conversation. But Harry had heard every word, and he now came up, with Katie clinging to him.

‘ Sir,’ said he, ‘ will you allow me to procure my ransom in the same way ? Will you allow this lady to go in company with the other, so as to procure the amount needed for my deliverance ? ’

‘ But I won’t go,’ said Katie hurriedly.

‘ What ! ’ said Harry. ‘ Oh, think—it’s for my sake, my life.’

‘ But I can’t,’ said Katie. ‘ I know I shall never see you again. Besides, what could I do alone ? ’

‘ You can go with this other lady, or with your aunt.’

‘ Oh, she can’t go with me,’ said auntie. ‘ Nothing would induce me to leave “ his Majesty.” The royal cause is just now in a critical condition, and we need all our resources.’

‘ Then you can go with the Spanish señorita,’ said Harry.

‘ But I’m afraid,’ said Katie.

‘ Afraid ! ’ said Harry. ‘ Why, there will be no danger. You will be sent with a guard.’

‘ Oh, it’s not that—it’s not that,’ said Katie ; ‘ it’s because I’m afraid I shall never see you again. And it’s cruel—very, very cruel in you ! ’

At this ‘ his Majesty ’ wiped his eyes. Then he raised his bottle and took another long pull. Then he heaved a sigh.

‘ Arrah, ye rogue,’ said he to Harry, ‘ ye’ve deludhered that poor gyerrul intoirely. She’s yours out-an’-out—no doubt av that ; an’ sure but it’s dead bate an’ heart-broke intoirely I’d be,

so I would, if it wasn't for the widdy here, that's a frind in time av nade, an' has a heart that's worth its weight in goold sove-reigns.'

'His Majesty' now took another long, long pull at the black bottle.

'If it wasn't that I had that other noble heart til fall back on,' said he, as he wiped his royal eyes with the back of his royal hand, 'I'd be fairly broken-hearted, so I would. But I'll be loike Tim in the song :

' " Oh, a widdy she lived in Limerick town,
Not far from Shannon water,
An' Tim kept company wid her,
A coortin' av Biddy, her daughter.
But Micky M'Graw cut in between,
And run away wid Biddy.
'Bogorra!' says Tim, 'the daughter's gone,
So, faiz, I'll take the widdy !'
The widdy !
Not Biddy !
The fond and faithful widdy !
Whooroor ! " ,

Singing this, the jovial monarch caught Mrs. Russell's hands in his, and proceeded to dance in a manner which was far more boisterous than dignified. Mrs. Russell, always fond and indulgent, lent herself to the royal whim, and danced much more vigorously than could have been expected from a person of her years. Katie clapped her hands in childish glee. The Carlists all applauded. The others looked puzzled. 'His Majesty' finally concluded his little dance, after which Mrs. Russell clung to him in a languishing attitude, and looked like a caricature of each of those other younger ladies who were all clinging so fondly to their respective lovers. The sight of Mrs. Russell in that languishing attitude came home to the hearts and consciences of the younger ladies, who all relinquished their lovers' arms, and insisted on standing by themselves.

Brooke had listened thoughtfully to all that had thus far been said. The Carlist chief was a puzzle to him ; but he saw that there was talk of holding to ransom, which to him had an ugly sound.

'Sir,' said he, 'are we to be kept prisoners in this tower ?'

'This tower, is it ?' said 'his Majesty.' 'Bogorra, I hope not. There's another tower a dale betther nor this. It's mesilf that 'ud be the proud man til let yez all go, an' yez 'ud all be prouder, I'll go bail ; but in that case, shure to glory, I'd be a loser ; but I hope to find yez comfortable quarthers in a foine stone house not a thousand moiles from this. Ye'll all be as comfortable as ould Dinny M'Divitt in the song :

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He wore a most beautiful ring
That were fixed round his wrist wid a rivet.
'Twas the ju'ge, shure, that sintined him there,
An' ther' all the boys wint til view him,
For the jury considered him dull
At discernin' twist 'mayum' and 'chaum.'
So fill up for the toast, an' I'll give it :
Here's a health to bowld Dinny M'Divitt ! "

At this the monarch raised the bottle to his mouth and took another long, long pull.

From this Brooke gathered that they were to be taken to the castle. He asked 'his Majesty' if this were so.

'Begorra, ye've hit it,' said 'his Majesty.'

'Is there anything to prevent our being taken there at once ?' asked Brooke.

'Bedad, there's iverything in loife. Shure, I've come on a surprise-party til capture the castle.'

It occurred to Brooke that this was a curious way to surprise a castle—by kindling torches, dancing, and singing songs ; but he made no remark upon that. He saw that the chief supposed the castle to be defended, and so he hastened to undeceive him.

'His Majesty' listened in amazement to Brooke's story.

'Begorra,' said he, 'here's another surprise ! Didn't I say we were a surprised party ? Shure, an' ye've all showed pluck, ivery man Jack av yez, includin' the ladies. An' that same'll have to be considered in our thraitnient wid yez about the ransom. Shure, I'll deduct five per cint., so I will. Nobody shall say we're not magnanimous. But bein' as there's nobody there, shure, the best thing for us to do is to go over at onct and raysume possession.'

With these words the monarch retired to give orders to his men, and in a short time the whole band, together with their prisoners, had passed over and had taken possession.

CHAPTER LX.

IN WHICH THE KING COMES TO CLAIM HIS OWN.

THE party of prisoners was conducted by 'his Majesty' to that upper room which had formerly been occupied by the ladies. Mrs. Russell clung to the royal person as fondly as ever. It was a critical hour in the destinies of Spain.

'Where's Rita,' cried 'his Majesty,' 'that cook of cooks? It's starvin' we are. I haven't seen her anywheres. I'll go an' hunt her up.'

With these words he hurried out, followed by Mrs. Russell. They descended the stairs, and their footsteps died away in the distance. No one was now with the prisoners except the wounded Republicans.

'Let us fly!' said Harry, in a quick, sharp whisper.

He hurried Katie to the chimney, and, clambering up, drew her after him. The others followed at once. Dolores came next to Harry.

'I know a secret way out,' said she. 'I will show the way. Let me go ahead. I know it in the dark.'

'Do you?' said Harry. 'Oh, then go ahead.'

Upon this Dolores took the lead along with Ashby; Harry and Katie came next, while Brooke and Talbot brought up the rear, these last being full of wonder at this unexpected revelation of the passage-way.

By this time each member of the party had gained a full and complete comprehension as well as appreciation of the present state of things, both with reference to the old lover, and also the new one. Embarrassment had now passed away, and all were full of hope, joy, and enthusiasm.

Suddenly a hollow groan sounded through the darkness.

'Who's there?' cried Ashby, in Spanish.

'Help! help!' said a faint voice, in English.

'An Englishman!' cried Ashby, speaking in English. 'Who are you?'

'Oh, help! help! I'm a prisoner. A fiend has me in her power! Once I was named Russell; but now—oh! oh! my name is Rita!'

Full of wonder, Ashby felt his way forward, and found a man on the floor. His legs and arms were tied. He was almost speechless, partly from terror and partly from joy. In a few words he told his story, which need not be repeated here. Rita had bound him, and had only left him a short time before at the sudden noise of their approach. It was not until afterward that they understood the whole story, for just then they were in too great a hurry to ask questions. A pull from Ashby's brandy-flask partly restored Russell's strength, but more was accomplished by his joy at this unexpected deliverance. Terror also came to his aid and lent him strength, and he was now more anxious than any of them to fly from this awful prison-house.

Dolores now led the way as before, and they all followed down long steps and crooked passage-ways until at last they reached the outlet. Here they found themselves in the chasm. A hasty consultation ended in the decision not to go to the tower for fear

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lest Carlists might be there. They concluded, therefore, to go along the chasm for some distance, and then ascend to the open country above, and after this to go forward as far as possible that same night.

They traversed the chasm in this way, and at length reached the top, where they found themselves to be about a mile away from the castle. Here the ground sloped gently, descending into a broad valley, to which they decided to go. In this direction they therefore proceeded as carefully as possible, and had gone about two miles in safety, when suddenly they became aware of a great noise, like the quick trot of numerous horses. It was advancing so rapidly that they had no time to take measures for escape, and, before they could consult together, a troop of horsemen came over a rising ground in front and galloped straight toward them.

A wild look all around showed them the hopelessness of their situation. The country was open. There was not a house or a fence or a tree or a bush that might afford a hiding-place. Flight was useless. They could do nothing now but trust to the faint hope that they might be deemed unworthy of attention. But soon this hope proved vain. They were seen—they were surrounded—they were again prisoners.

They soon learned that this new band consisted of Carlists; that they were on their way to the castle to join the King, who had gone on before.

The King!

Katie knew who that was. Harry was puzzled, as he always had been, about 'his Majesty.' Dolores also was mystified, since she had never believed that 'his Majesty' was what he pretended to be. Ashby, also, had not believed it, and now was more puzzled than any of them. Brooke and Talbot, however, were strangers to the pretensions of that singular being who called himself King, and therefore hoped that this would turn out for the best. As for Russell, he was in despair, for to him 'his Majesty' was more dreaded than any other human being, with the single and terrible exception of Rita. And now he felt himself dragged back to meet him—worse, to meet Rita. Despair took full possession of him. All his strength left him, and one of the troopers had to give up his horse to the world-worn captive.

It was with such feelings as these that the party reached the castle, and were led upstairs into the presence of the King.

The first glance which they gave around showed them that there had been a slight mistake somewhere.

Down below, the court-yard and the lower hall were full of men. Here there were twenty or thirty, all in the uniform of officers; all men of distinguished air and good-breeding; all

gentlemen, and far different from the ragged gang whom they had last encountered here.

In the centre of this company stood a man who at once attracted to himself the eyes of the party of prisoners. He was of medium size, with heavy black moustache, and dark penetrating eyes. He had the air of one who had always been accustomed to the respectful obedience of others ; an air of command which rested well upon his bold and resolute face. It was the face of one who lived in the consciousness that he was the centre, and strength, and hope of a gallant party ; of one who believed himself to hold a divine commission to regenerate a fallen country ; of one who knew that he alone in all the world held up aloft, at the head of an army, the proud banner of Conservatism ; of one who, for this mission, had given up ease and luxury and self-indulgence ; had entered upon a life of danger, hardship, and ceaseless toil, and every day lived in the very presence of Death ; in short, they saw before them the idol of the Spanish Legitimists—the high-souled, the chivalrous Don Carlos.

The quick penetrating glance which he threw upon the party soon faded away into a pleasant smile.

'Welcome, ladies !' said he ; 'welcome, gentlemen ! Some one spoke of a party of prisoners ; I had no hope of such good fortune as to meet with guests. But you must have met with some misfortune, in which case let me help you.'

He spoke in Spanish, of course—a language which is usually spoken in Spain ; and a very pretty language it is, too, and one which I should advise all my readers to learn ; for they would find it uncommonly useful in case they should ever find themselves in a castle in Spain.

It was Harry who replied. He told the whole story as far as it was known to himself, dwelling especially upon the character and actions of that strange being who had played the rôle of monarch. Harry's light and playful nature threw a tinge of comicality around the whole story, which was highly appreciated by all his hearers. And so it was that a smile began to go round, until at length it deepened and developed into laughter, and so went on deepening and broadening and intensifying, until at last the laughter grew, if not Homeric, at least loud enough and long enough for a castle in Spain.

'It's the Irishman !' cried Don Carlos—'it's the Irish guerilla ! It's O'Toole ! The villain ! he shall hang for this !'

Harry was too good-natured to feel revengeful, and was just beginning to beg for O'Toole's life, when suddenly there arose behind them the sound of hurried footsteps, followed by wild cries. All turned, and a strange figure met their eyes.

It was a woman. She wore a military cloak and an officer's kepi. She looked wildly around.

'Where is he? Where is my own one?' she cried—"his Majesty?" Where is the hope of Spain?

Russell saw her. He threw out wide his manly arms—he opened his mouth: 'Jew—li—a-r-r-r-r-r!' With a long, loud cry he shouted this name, and rushed toward her.

Mrs. Russell saw him coming—her lost, lamented lord! the one whom she had mourned as dead! Was this his ghost? or was he indeed alive? In any case, the shock was awful for a woman of delicate nerves; and Mrs. Russell prided herself on being a woman of very delicate nerves. So she did what a woman of delicate nerves ought to do—she gave a loud, long, piercing shriek, and fainted dead away in her fond husband's arms.

Don Carlos gave a grin, and then pulled at his moustache.

'Another victim,' said he to the laughing company. 'Oh yes; O'Toole shall certainly swing for this. Discipline must and shall be maintained. Send out and catch the fellow. Have him up here at once.'

They sent out and they hunted everywhere, but nowhere could they discover any traces of the brilliant, the festive, the imaginative, the mimetic, the ingenious O'Toole. He was never seen again.

Some say that in the dead of night two figures might have been seen slowly wending their way up the path toward the tower; that the one looked like O'Toole and the other looked like Rita. It may have been so; many things are possible in this evil world; and if so, we must suppose that these two gradually faded away among the mists of cloud-land that always surround a castle in Spain.

CHAPTER LXI.

IN WHICH THERE IS AN END OF MY STORY.

THE illustrious host received his guests with large and lavish hospitality. The best that could be afforded by a bounteous commissariat was placed before them. The table was laid, the banquet was spread, and all the company sat down together.

At the head of the table was Don Carlos.

On his right was Talbot, with Brooke beside her.

On his left was Katie, with Harry beside her.

Next to Harry was Dolores, with Ashby beside her.

Next to Brooke was a priest in somewhat martial attire, whom Don Carlos introduced to them as—*The Curé of Santa Cruz!*

He was a broad-shouldered, middle-aged man, with strongly marked features, eagle eye, and bold and resolute face. This was the very man whom Brooke had once personated; but Brooke was just now silent about that particular matter, nor did he care to mention to any of his Spanish friends the fact that he was an American, and a newspaper correspondent. In spite of the passports and credentials with which his wallet was stuffed and with which his pockets bristled, he had not been recognised by any one present; a fact that seems to show that those papers had been obtained from some of the inferior officers of Don Carlos, or perhaps from some other correspondent who had fallen in the practice of his professional duties.

The Curé of Santa Cruz said grace, and the banquet began.

Don Carlos was a man of joyous soul and large, exuberant spirit, with a generous, romantic, and heroic nature. He also knew how to lay aside, on occasion, all the cares of his position; so now he was no longer the commander of a gallant army, the banner-bearer of a great cause, the claimant of a throne. On the contrary, he was the simple gentleman among other gentlemen—*primus inter pares*—the hospitable host, chiefly intent upon performing the pleasing duties of that office.

He had also showed such an amiable interest in the adventures of his guests, that they had frankly told him all that was of any interest. Harry had a more confiding disposition than the others, and after the ladies had retired he disclosed more and more of their affairs, until at last their gallant host had obtained a very clear idea of the sentimental side of the story.

'Gentlemen,' said Don Carlos at length, 'to-morrow we shall resume our march, and I shall be happy to do for you all in my power. I shall be sorry to part with you, yet glad to restore you to your liberty. A company will take you to the nearest rail-

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way-station, from which you can proceed to your respective destinations. But before you go, allow me to offer you a suggestion which I am sure you will not take amiss. You, gentlemen, are looking forward to the time when these lovely and amiable ladies shall sustain the closest possible relation toward you. You will pardon me, I trust, if I hint just now that their position is a very embarrassing one, travelling as they are without proper chaperonage. In Spanish eyes that is a calamity. Now, the suggestion that I was about to make is this, namely, that you should free these ladies from this embarrassment by persuading them to accept you now as their legal protectors. Surely nothing can be more desirable on all sides. No place can be more fitting than this; no hour more convenient; no scene more romantic. As for the priest, here sits my reverend friend the Curé of Santa Cruz—a warrior-priest, an eccentric character, yet a brave and noble soul; and he, let me assure you, can tie the knot so tight that it could not be made tighter even by the Holy Father himself, assisted by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Archbishop of Canterbury.'

This suggestion came as sudden as thunder from a clear sky; yet after the first shock it was considered by all present, and especially by those most concerned, as—first, ingenious; then, happy; then, most excellent; and, finally, glorious. When this unparalleled and matchless royal speech was ended the whole company burst forth into rapturous applause.

Ashby and Harry, in wild excitement, forgot everything but their old friendship and their latest love. They grasped one another's hands with all their olden fervour.

'Hurrah, old fellow!' cried Harry.

'Glorious! isn't it, old boy?' cried Ashby.

'I'll do it; won't you?' cried Harry.

'I will, by Jove!' cried Ashby.

And thus that quarrel was settled.

Brooke said nothing, but his eyes grew moist in his deep joy, and he muttered and hummed all to himself the words of some strange old song which had no connection with anything at all. For this was his fashion, the odd old boy! whenever his feelings were deeply stirred, and he fell into that fashion now:

'I never knew real happiness
Till I became a Methodess;
So come, my love, and jine with me,
For here's a parson 'll marry we.
Come for'ad and jine,
Come for'ad and jine,
This night come for'ad and jine.
A-A-A-A-men!'

During the banquet and the subsequent proceedings, the virtuous Russell had been silent and distraught. Though restored

to the arms of the best of wives, still he was not happy. There was yet something wanting. And what was that? Need I say that it was the lost package with the precious bonds? Ah no, for every one will surely divine the feelings and thoughts of this sorrowful man.

And he in his abstraction had been trying to think what could be done; for the bonds were lost to him: they were not in the place where he had concealed them. What that place really was he now knew only too well. Had that fiend Rita found them? Perhaps so—yet perhaps not. On the whole, as a last resort, he concluded that it would be best to appeal to Don Carlos. His face indicated goodness, and his whole treatment of the party invited confidence; there surely he might meet with sympathy, and if the package had been found by any of the Carlists it might be restored.

And so, as the uproar subsided, Russell arose, and walking toward Don Carlos, suddenly, and to the amazement and amusement of all present, flung himself on his knees, crying:

‘A boon! a boon, my liege!’

These preposterous words had lingered in his memory from some absurd reading of his boyhood.

Don Carlos smiled.

‘What does he say?’ he asked.

Harry came forward to act as interpreter.

Russell now told all. Harry knew in part the fortunes of the bonds after they had left Russell’s hands; but then they had again been lost, so that he could not tell what had finally become of them. Of his own part in finding them, and then concealing them again, he thought best to say nothing.

Ashby, however, had something to say which was very much to the purpose. It seems that Dolores had found the bonds, had kept them, and had finally handed them over to Ashby for safe-keeping. He at once concluded that they were Katie’s, and was waiting for a convenient opportunity to restore them. The opportunity had now come. This was his simple story, but as it was told to Don Carlos in Spanish, Russell did not understand one word.

‘Where are they now?’ asked Don Carlos.

‘Here,’ said Ashby, and he produced the package from his coat-pocket.

‘Give them to me,’ said Don Carlos. ‘I will arrange it all. Do you know, gentlemen, this is the happiest moment of my life. I seem like a kind of *Deus ex machina* coming in at the right time at the end of a series of adventures to produce universal peace and harmony.

‘I hope and trust,’ said Ashby, ‘that “your Majesty” may be

not happy. There that? Need I say bonds? Ah no, for and thoughts of this

to think what could they were not in the that place really was Rita found them? as a last resort, he to Don Carlos. His tment of the party meet with sympathy, y of the Carlists it

arose, and walking azement and amuse- es, crying :

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which was very much ound the bonds, had r to Ashby for safe- ere Katie's, and was restore them. The simple story, but as did not understand

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will arrange it all. moment of my life. ing in at the right o produce universal

r Majesty" may be

the *Deus ex machina* for all Spain, and interpose at last to produce universal peace and harmony here.'

'Señor,' said Don Carlos, 'you talk like a born courtier; yet at the same time,' he added, in a solemn tone, 'what you have just said is the high hope and aspiration of my life.'

After this creditable little speech Ashby handed over the package, and Don Carlos took it. At this sight the lower jaw of the venerable Russell fell several inches. This Don Carlos seemed to him not one whit better than the other. The bonds were now lost to him for ever. That was plain enough. Yet he dared not say a word. After all, they were not his, but Katie's. Harry knew that, and Ashby also. What could he say? He was dumb, and so he crawled back, discomfited and despairing, to his seat.

'Gentlemen,' said Don Carlos, 'you must use your utmost efforts with the ladies. Everything shall be done that can be most fitting to the occasion. We shall have music and festivities. It is not often that I have adventures like these. Let the old castle renew its youth. Let these walls ring to music and song. Don't let the ladies escape you, gentlemen. If anything is wanting to your persuasions, tell them—as that rascal O'Toole, my double, would say—tell them that it is "our royal will."'

Another burst of applause, mingled with laughter, followed, after which Harry, Ashby, and Brooke hurried off to see the ladies.

What passed between the different couples on that memorable occasion, what objections were made, on the one hand, by shrinking modesty, and what arguments and entreaties were put forth, on the other hand, by the ardent lovers, need not be narrated here. Whether it was meek compliance with a loved one's wish, or dread of Spanish etiquette, or respect for the 'royal will,' or whatever else it may have been, suffice it to say that at last the delighted swains won a consent from the blushing maidens; after which they rushed forth in wild rapture to spend the remainder of the night in prolonged festivities with their gallant host and his festive band of cavaliers.

There was one, however, who took no part in all this. Excusing himself from the festive board on the plea of ill health, he held aloof, a prey to dark and gloomy suspicions. These he communicated to Harry before the 'evening session' began. It seemed that the much afflicted Russell, believing the true Don Carlos to be no better than the false one, held the firm conviction that the bonds had been appropriated by him for his own purposes, and that their proceeds would be squandered on the extravagant schemes of the hopeless Carlist insurrection. But Harry scouted the idea.

'Keep them? He keep them?' he cried. 'Never! Don Carlos is a gentleman.'

At this Russell groaned and turned away.

Meanwhile the preparations for the coming event were diligently carried on. Before morning the ancient chapel of the hoary castle was decked out with evergreens brought from the neighbouring forest, and everything was made ready for the marriage-feast.

Morning came. All gathered in the chapel, which in its robes of evergreens looked like a bower.

The three buglers and one drummer belonging to the troop played in magnificent strains the stirring notes of the 'Wedding March.'

The Curé of Santa Cruz presented an unexceptionable appearance in his ecclesiastical robes.

There, too, was the man who claimed to be the rightful King of Spain, surrounded by men who represented some of the noblest families of the nation—an illustrious company, the like of which none of the principals in this ceremony had ever dreamed of as likely to be present at his wedding.

The bridegrooms came, looking, it must be confessed, slightly seedy.

Then came the brides, resplendent in their best attire, procured from the luggage which had been brought here at the time of their capture by O'Toole.

There were no bridesmaids. But Mrs. Russell was present, leaning on the arm of her beloved husband, all in tears. And why? Was it from regrets for the lost crown of Spain? or was it merely from the tender sentiment which is usually called forth on such an occasion? or was it from the thought of that one whose fortunes she had followed for many eventful hours with a view to such a conclusion as this?

No matter.

Reader, let us draw a veil over the emotions of this afflicted lady.

The marriages went on. The knots were all tied.

Then came the wedding breakfast.

Don Carlos was in his best mood. He jested, he laughed, he paid innumerable compliments to the ladies, and finally gave the whole party an invitation to visit him on some future day at his royal court in Madrid. Which invitation, it may be stated parenthetically, has not yet been accepted.

After this little speech, Don Carlos handed over to Harry the Spanish bonds.

'I understand,' said he, 'that your lady will soon be of age, but under any circumstances, according to Spanish law, the husband is entitled to receive all the property of his wife. Take this, therefore, and you will thus relieve our aged friend yonder, the venerable Señor Russell, from all further responsibility as guardian.'

Harry took it, and could not help casting a triumphant glance at Russell, but that good man looked away. He afterward told his wife that he had lost all faith in Providence, and felt but little desire to live any longer in such an evil world. Since the bonds were lost to him it mattered not who gained them—whether Bourbon, bandit, or bridegroom.

At length the hour of their departure came. The luggage was heaped up in a huge waggon. Another waggon was ready to take the ladies, and horses were prepared for the gentlemen. With these a troop of horsemen was sent as a guard.

As they passed out through the gates Don Carlos stood and bade them all farewell.

So they passed forth on their way to liberty, and home, and happiness; and so they moved along, until at length the Castle, with its hoary walls, its lofty towers, its weather-beaten turrets and battlements, was lost in the distance.

THE END.



